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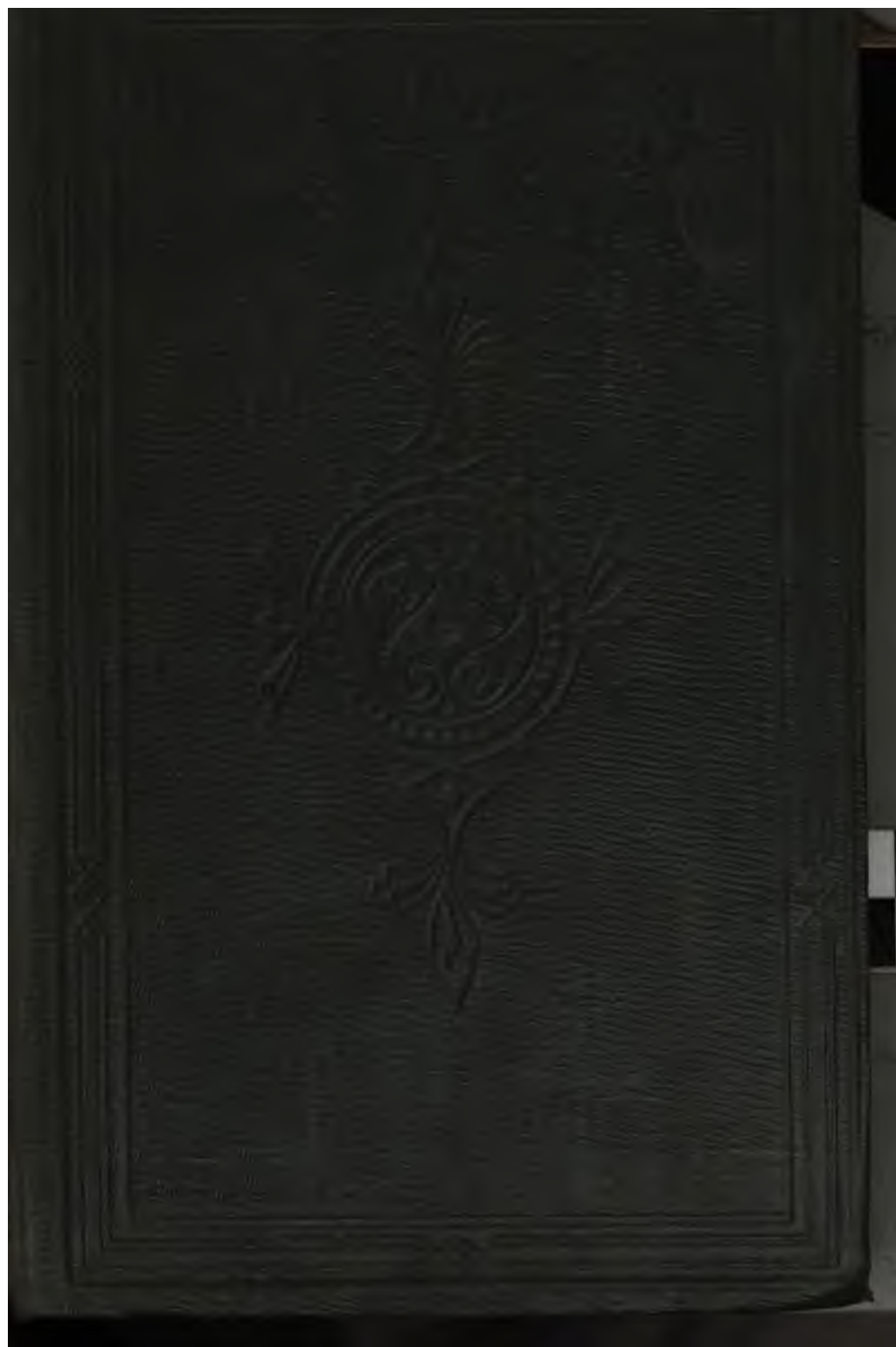
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# AVILLION

## AND OTHER TALES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"OLIVE," "THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY," "AGATHA'S HUSBAND,"  
&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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Old Bailey.

I offer these, that were of my May-days,

To May.





## ADVERTISEMENT.

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## · AVILLION; OR, THE HAPPY ISLES.

### A Fireside Fancy.

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“ I am going a long way,  
With these thou seest—if, indeed, I go—  
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)  
To the island-valley of Avillion.”

TENNYSON.

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#### CHAPTER I.

WE sat together on the deck, Liliás and I, listening to the boom of the wide Atlantic, and looking into each other's eyes. A thriftless occupation, but infinitely sweet. We had not grown tired of it yet, though we had been married three weeks; our love was not even a shadow the less. It seemed impossible for us to date its beginning; Heaven grant we may never know its end!

We had been wedded three weeks. Three weeks! Could it be, then, that only one little month had passed since that day—the day of days!—when—  
But I will tell all concerning it. I will chronicle its

every hour, whether of suffering or joy; for now both are alike written goldenly on this happy heart of mine.

I had been ill for a long time—indeed, from my youth up I have rarely known the blessing of continuous health. But though this circumstance gave a languor and a half-melancholy dreaminess to my whole character, I think, too, it made me more humble, more loving, more thankful for all the love which was showered upon me. And when my long illness came, this blessing increased tenfold. I heard people compassionate “poor Wilfred Mayer,” and say how hard it was that a young man should have the strength and glory of his youth brought thus low. I did not feel it so; I knew that there was power, aye, and beauty, in my soul; and I cared not for the feeble body. Besides, I lived in such an atmosphere of love. There was my father; my bold, frank-hearted brother, younger than I, yet assuming all the tender protection of eldership; Hester, the most loving of sisters; and one, dearer than any sister—Lilias Hay.

But the day—that day! In the morning I, feeble always, seemed feebler than ordinary. I lay back in my arm-chair, listening to the soft pattering of the April rain upon the window-sill, without any connected thought, except a fear that the weather might keep Lilias Hay in-doors: and I did not like to miss seeing her, even for a day. I heard the sound of an opening door; but it was only the physician—accompanied by a second, whom I had not seen before. I

was disappointed, and paid little heed to either, until I noticed that they drew my sister aside, and spoke earnestly. While she listened, Hester turned pale, looked at me, and began to weep. Her tears seemed to fall on my heart like ice-drops, piercing me with a shuddering dread. I felt, I knew, that that smooth-tongued stranger had, with his calm, stolid lips, pronounced my death-doom.

And I must die! The Shadow, hovering near me so long that I had ceased to regard it, was then close at hand—its very breath was upon me! I MUST DIE!

Hester came to my side with the second physician. I looked fixedly upon *him*, my doomer. I believe I said some words which betrayed my thoughts; for he answered, with a bland, cheerful smile, “that I must not imagine anything so serious; a voyage, perhaps a summer in Madeira, would soon—”

I turned away; I would hear no more of the smiling lie. Thank God, it was not breathed by Hester’s lips! No; she only wept, and kissed me once or twice softly.

“In a week he must go!” I heard the physician whisper. Then I knew there was no hope. They went away, and left me alone.

I tried to think of peace, of religion; I tried to say, “Thy will be done;” but the strong writhings of human passion shut out from me even the face of God. To die, to leave all my dear ones, to part from Lillias Hay!—I uttered her name almost with a groan—the thought was horrible. In this fearful moment I knew



how madly, how despairingly, I loved her. She knew it, too, though I had never told her so. There was no need. The deep tenderness between us had grown from year to year, until it became a part of our life. I say *our life* ; for we seemed to have but one. Neither said, "I love ;" but the daily tide of our existence as it flowed harmoniously on, cried out with its thousand voices, "See, how these two love one another!"

I had hitherto been content that it should be so, knowing well that Liliás would wed no man save me, and that one day the loving friendship between us would be changed for a closer bond. But now I must die—die without having called her wife, without even having taken her once to my heart. O misery! that blessed, long-dreamed-of moment would never come; I must go down into the dark grave; I must lay my head in the dust *there*, and not on the pure, faithful bosom of my Liliás Hay!

I groaned aloud; I writhed in my anguish. Life and youth were yet strong within me. *I could not die.* Sometimes I resolved at all hazards to tell Liliás of my love. Perhaps I might draw life from the lips of my betrothed; perhaps a wife's prayers might yet stand between me and the Destroyer. I would risk it! I would ask her to wed me now—at once. What,—wed youth with sickness, peace with misery, life with death? God forgive the sinful thought! No; rather let me die alone, with dumb lips that carried their eternal secret mournfully to the grave. Best so—best even for *her* sake.

I grew calmer. My frozen despair melted into a dew of tears. I began to pray the prayers that my dead mother had taught me when I was a child. They made me feel like a child now, peaceful and humble. When Hester came in again, I was able to look in her face and smile. She did not weep, but talked with me calmly and affectionately, about my journey. I said I would rather remain at home; but she prayed—nay, they all prayed—that I would embrace any chance that might spare me longer to their dear love. I promised. Then my sister left the room, and brought in Lilius Hay.

Lilius was very pale, but composed and tearless. She came and sat down beside me, in her usual place. I laid my hand on her lap; she took it, and held it for a long time without a word.

“You know all, Lilius; that I am going to Madeira?”

“Yes.”

I marvelled, nay, I was almost pained, that she said no more. My Lilius! I did not know thy heart even then!

They were all in the room: my father, Charles, Hester, and one who was to be Hester's bridegroom that very month. As they began to consult as to who should accompany me on this voyage of doom, young Fortescue drew her nearer to him with an anxious look. Hester cast her eyes down; but I saw the struggle in her heart. I would not put the claim even of a dying brother before that of an

affianced husband. I said I would rather have Charles with me ; and, after some resistance, Hester assented. They soon went away, and left me, as they often did, alone with my friend Lillas.

*My friend!* Was it friendship, when her every tone, her very movement, caused my heart to thrill, even through the cold sluggish pulses of disease. How keenly I suffered ! How I yearned to lay my cheek on the dear hand I held, and pray her to take my poor dying head to her bosom, and let my last breath utter the life-long love which on earth might never be fulfilled. But I uttered it not. Even when, speaking of my going away so soon, her words came brokenly, and she leaned her brow against my chair in a long tearful silence, I only laid my hand softly on her hair, and bade "God bless her." Better, I thought, that she should mourn as a *friend* than as a widow.—Lillas, my faithful one, was I right ?

Then we talked in a quiet, ordinary way, about my journey and its arrangements.

"Hester will go with you, surely ; of course, Hester must go," said Lillas.

"No, Hester must not, ought not," I answered earnestly. "Nothing should divide two who love one another." And then I trembled at my words, and I saw Lillas tremble too. But soon after she spoke of some indifferent subject, and continued to do so until the time came for her to go home. We bade each other "good-night" (we dared not say "good-bye"), parting as usual with the long, lingering hand-

clasp only. She walked slowly to the door, her step seeming to me like the rending of soul and body. Whether by gesture or groan I betrayed the agony I know not; but Liliás turned round. The next moment she had flung herself on her knees beside me.

"Wilfred, Wilfred! in life or death I cannot part with you. Hush!"—and her voice grew solemn with unutterable tenderness—"do not speak. Let me say the truth, long known to us both—that—" But she could not say it. Only she caught my hands—wildly, fondly, fast—"Oh, Wilfred! do not—nay, you shall not go alone. Friend! lover! *husband!* take me with you!"

I fell forward—my head on her shoulder. My lips asked feebly and blindly for the holy seal of troth-plight. I felt it—the first pure kiss of Liliás Hay; and then I felt no more, but sank into a swoon of joy.

It lasted not long; for with returning consciousness came that iron will of self-martyrdom, which would have made me die with my love unspoken: I lifted myself from her enclasping arms.

"Liliás," I cried, "this must not be. You would give me life, and I you—death. I dare not take the boon."

She arose; quick blushes diffused her face and neck, and then faded away. O love! my faithful love! I could dream I saw thee now, leaning over me with that white marble brow, and low, solemn voice.

"Wilfred, you think of yourself alone—you have not remembered *me*. Your love is my life—you have

no right to take that from me. If I must suffer, better—better a thousand times that I should suffer with you than apart.” And she sank once more on her knees beside me. “Oh, Wilfred! my only comfort—my only hope in this world—cast me not from you. Let me be your wife, to watch, tend, and cherish you, until—until you go away, and then to follow—soon, oh, soon!”

I opened my arms, crying, “Lilias, come.” And thus, in one long embrace, silent as death—or love, we plighted our troth to each other.

A week after I and *my wife* were in the midst of the wide ocean, on our way to Madeira.

Reader, you do not wonder now that it was almost heaven to me to lie silent on the twilight-shadowed deck, doing nothing, save look into the eyes of my Lilias.

They were eyes, now bright with hope as well as love: for it seemed as though the shadows of doom were passing away from mine. I drank in the soft breezes of the southern sea; they gave me new life, as all said. But I knew, O my wife! that this new life was brought by that precious love of thine.

---

## CHAPTER II.

It was a pleasant voyage—by day under the sunny heaven, by night beneath the stars. Many a time Lilias and I sat for hours together on the deck, hand

in hand like little children, pleased with the veriest trifles—a cloud on the sky, a flying fish on the water—talking sweet idleness, half sense, half nonsense, as loving and happy ones ever will; and then my wife would shake her head with a mock reproof, and say, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves—we, burthened between us with the conjoined weight of nearly fifty years. She was so happy, that she even used to sport with me, sometimes jesting about my having compelled herself to become the wooer at last. She kept buzzing about me like a merry little bee, her blithe voice lulling me either by song or speech, until, still feeble, I often sank to sleep on the deck, with my head on her lap. And then, many and many a time did I wake, feeling my hair wet with the dew of passionate tenderness which had rained on me from those dear eyes. “Thank God, thank God, for the blessedness of love!” was all my heart could cry. But thus it did cry, day and night, in a loud pæan of joy that even angels might hear.

Friend reader, I dare say thou thinkest we were a couple of simpletons! We smile on thee calmly. Poor fool! thou hast never loved.

One night we watched the twilight into starlight, and could not tear ourselves from the quiet, lonely deck. It was a strange and awful thing to be sweeping in the darkness over that vast, desolate sea, with not a sound near us, save the flapping of a sail and the wind in the cordage singing almost like a human voice, or one which, though all spiritual now, yet comes

laden with the echo of its remembered mortal wail. Our converse partook of the character of the scene, and glided from the sweet trifling of contented earthly love, into the solemn communion of two spirits, wedded not only for life but for immortality. We spoke of the deep mysteries of our being, of the unseen and immaterial world. All these things were ever to me full of a strange fascination, in which Liliás shared. Why should she not? All our lives we had thought alike, she following whither I led. But she ever walked meekly, knowing that the man is the head of the woman. Her wisdom was born and taught of love, as a woman's should be. And to me it brought not weariness but strength; I thanked Heaven that the wife of my bosom was also the wife of my soul!

In the midst of our talk there came by our only fellow-passenger, a German doctor. He startled us both, as he moved from behind a sail, the setting moon lighting up his always pallid face and long, gray hair. He seemed to us, in our present visionary mood, almost phantom-like in his appearance.

Liliás started, and then laughed. "It is only Herr Foerster. Let us speak to him."

"No," I said, for I did not like the man. He was a mystic. He vexed me with his wild aspect, his floating locks, and his perpetual harangues about Kant and Swedenborg, and Jacob Boehmen. Dear Liliás combated my prejudice in her own gentle way. Where I condemned the eccentric philosopher, who hung out

his wisdom as a sign to catch men's eyes, she pitied the strange old man, half-mad, and wholly desolate.

"See, Wilfred, how wistfully he is looking out over the waters. We know not what sorrowful thoughts may be in that poor brain of his. You will let me speak to him, dearest?"

She had her way, for it was the right way, and I knew it. In a few minutes the old German was sitting with us, inclined to begin his fantastic lore. But the mood had changed since yesterday, and his speech was less mystic, and more full of dreamy poetry. I was thankful that he had forgotten Kant. As his countenance lighted up, and his speech grew earnest, I began to feel that there was sincerity even in his eccentricities, and method in his madness.

"You were standing mute and absorbed when I spoke to you, Herr Foerster," said Liliás. "Were you thinking about home?"

"I have no home."

There was scarcely any sorrow in his eye or tone. He had passed these human weaknesses.

"But I was watching for a home, a true home—one in search of which I have traversed these seas for ten years. I shall find it some time—I know I shall."

Liliás looked at him compassionately; and then glanced involuntarily—first to the sea, then upwards to the starry, steel-blue sky.

"No: you mistake;" and the old mystic shook his head with a half-scornful smile, "I seek nothing so vague as that: I have no wish to die. Perhaps"—



and his voice grew mysterious—"Perhaps I never may die."

My wife crept nearer to me, and gazed earnestly on the man whom I now thought surely mad; but there was no sign of frenzy in his manner. Reassured, Liliás again spoke.

"Where and what is this home you seek?"

He pointed to the young moon just dipping into the western sea, amidst a bank of fantastic clouds—"Look there! do you not see beyond that pale crescent, where sea and sky meet, a luminous verge, resembling white hills and shining towers? *Resembling*, did I say? Nay, it is! That is the very spot I seek—the land beyond sunset—the Island of the Blest."

Surprised and somewhat startled by his sudden vehemence, neither Liliás nor I made any answer. He went on, changing abruptly from the energy of enthusiasm to the calmness of eager reasoning.

"You will doubt this, I know. You will think me mad. Many have done so—but I smile at them. The same was said of the great Ithacan—of Columbus—of other noble spirits who have set out on a like track."

"But none have ever found its ending, Herr Foerster," said I. "No man ever yet reached the Island of the Blest."

"Rather say, no man ever came back from thence. How should he?" And the German smiled a calm superior smile. As he went on, his plain, well-arranged arguments almost staggered my doubts as to his insanity. His speech was so like truth.

“Men in all ages have believed in the existence of this land. Legends, variously modified by different ages and climes, have all agreed in this universal fact, that far westward, in the midst of the vast mysterious ocean, untraversed and untraversable by man, lies an island, whose dwellers have all joys of humanity without its pain—all the sensuous delights of earth, combined with the purity of heaven. Who knows but that the angels carried God’s Eden and planted it there in the midst of the sea?”

“This faith is very beautiful,” said Liliás, attracted even against her will. “I had rather believe thus, than believe that the divine garden—trodden of angels, visited by God—was transformed into a howling wilderness.”

I could not but smile at her graceful fancy; but the influence of this strange man was upon me also. “You say, Herr Foerster, that this belief has extended over all ages. How so?”

“Is it not among the Greeks? Listen to Homer.” And with his grand, rich German accent, he poured out in kindred strength a torrent of that majestic Greek, which was in truth worthy to be the speech of Olympus—

“The large utterance of the early gods.”

“It sounds glorious,” murmured Liliás; “but I am a woman, and have only a woman’s learning. I should like to hear it in our English tongue.”

Herr Foerster obeyed.

“ Thus it runs, then :—

‘ But thee the ever-living gods will send  
 Unto the Elysian plain and distant bounds  
 Of earth—  
 There life is easiest unto men : no snow,  
 Or wintry storm, or rain, at any time  
 Is there ; but evermore the ocean sends  
 Soft-breathing air of Zephyr to refresh  
 The habitants.’

“ So says the blind seer and poet—for poets are all seers. Hear, too, the grand Pindar, still speaking the belief of his country—as in those days bard, prophet, and priest were one :—

‘ They speed their way  
 To Kronos’ palace, where, around  
 The Island of the Blest, the airs  
 Of ocean breathe, and golden flowers  
 Blaze : some on land  
 From shining trees, and other kinds  
 The water feeds. Of these  
 Garlands and bracelets round their arms they bind.’

“ —Do you hearken, friends?”

We did indeed sit listening, in a silence that was not without awe. The scene, the hour, the gestures and tones of this man, carried with them a supernatural influence. More and more he spoke, collecting with infinite learning every mythical fable that could suggest or confirm this belief ; the story of Ulysses, who sailed far into the wild desert of waters in search of the land beyond the sunset ; the Roman superstition of the Island of Atlantis, which ancient

fable, if fable it were, had left its impress on the Atlantic; the legends of mediæval lore, that spurred on to enterprise a Columbus and a Gama; the fantastic romance concerning the "happy land of Faerie," the Island of Avalon and its dwellers, once of earth—King Arthur, Sir Launfal, Ogier le Danois—all these fanciful creations of history and fiction were brought together by our companion—enthusiast, or madman, whichever he were—with a reality utterly astounding.

"You see," he continued, "that each legend coincides in one fact—the Happy Islands that lie in the western sea. Universal fable proves individual truth—at least, I believed so; and when the world became desolate to me, I turned my thoughts to a new land—the land of the blest."

"You have suffered, then," whispered Liliás' tender voice.

"Few men long so ardently for another world, as they whose hope is gone from this. But I must not speak of these things now: all are past—long past. Why did you make me think of them? You—oh, you twain have no need to seek the Happy Isles."

He drooped his face a moment, and then went on, harshly and wild as before. "I dreamed this dream, night and day, until I was convinced it was a truth. I squandered all my wealth—for whom should I keep it?—and then set sail. Ten years, ten long years, have I spent on these seas, passing from ship to ship—suffering famine and drought, fire and wreck; yet never, oh! never have I touched the land of the blest.

But, hark you!" and he caught my hand—"I know they are here, in this very ocean. I see them sometimes—at sunset, or at dawn, far off in the horizon they never come nearer. But they will come near: ah, yes! I know that some day I shall find the Happy Isles."

He stretched his clasped hands towards the ocean in full confidence of faith.

"Poor dreamer!" I thought. "Are they wise or mad—to be envied or pitied—the many who, like thee, toss blindly on the world's dark sea, vainly seeking the Happy Isles?"

But I had not time for more speech; for suddenly there seized me a racking pain, darting arrow-like through breast and brain. It was the fore-warning of sufferings I well knew of old. They came upon me, thronging thick and fast, sharp rending pains which lowered my manhood to the shrieking agony of a child. And there, alone beside me, sat the faithful one who had followed me over the seas—true woman, true wife! Thank Heaven—it was her thought as well as mine—thank Heaven! that she *was* my wife now; that it was hers to fold her cool hands round my brow, to gather me to her bosom as a mother would a sick child. Every form and phase of tenderest love—sister-love, mother-love, wife-love—seemed mingled into one, and poured out upon me from the heart of my Lilies. I knew now—would that every man on earth knew!—how infinite a faithful woman's love can be!

Stronger and stronger grew these torturing pains,

until my senses became dim. I scarce felt even the winding arms of my Liliás, until they were removed, and I perceived bending over me the German mystic. He spoke, I thought, of some rare drug which would surely lull my sufferings.

"It is very fearful—this new power!" answered Liliás.

I heard *her* voice, every tone.

Those around her spoke a few words. I only knew their effect by her convulsive shudder and smothered cry; but soon after she said—

"Herr Foerster, you are a good man; I trust you with my life—more than my life, remember! Let my husband try this, and God be merciful to him and me!"

The German stooped down. To my distempered fancy his eyes appeared to flame like demons', and his tongue to hiss in her ear—

"You have no fear?"

"No!" she replied.

"It is well—and you are wise! Two hours more of these tortures, and—"

I heard no more; but as he went away I felt Liliás shiver; she drew me closer to her, and kissed passionately my lips and eyes. I strove to speak, but my mind would not concentrate itself so as to frame one intelligible sentence. The German came back. He knelt before me, and I perceived a faint fragrance that diffused itself on the air I breathed. One struggle I made to convince myself that all was real—that I was clasped safe in my wife's arms—and then I gave myself to the delicious

numbness which stole over me. My eyes closed ; the gathering lights that flitted before them disappeared : it was as though some spirit hand were folding over sight and hearing a dim, gray veil. A few times I felt my heart booming up and down, like a creature of life ; I seemed almost to behold it beating in my bosom—its great pulses heaving continually louder and higher, like waves of the sea ; and once or twice I distinguished those rending pains—pains darting lightning-like—pains that could be seen as well as felt : for in this strange spell all the various senses seemed to be confounded and mingled.

Then all grew peace. Closer and closer gathered over me the solemn veil : one by one my heart's leaping pulses sank lower and lower—as if dull fingers pressed them into stillness. All pain ceased, and with it all perception of being. I faintly stirred my hand, to convince myself of my bodily existence. I tried to make my lips express the thoughts which dwelt in my still conscious mind.

“ I sleep, Lilies, I sleep ! ” It sounded less like my own human voice than that of a spirit ; but it was answered.

“ Yes, my own dearest, you will sleep soon.”

Then all the outward world became dim—the sounds and sights about me fading as earth-landscapes fade before one who voyages through the air, rising higher and higher, until cities, towers, and trees—are all an undistinguishable mass. Thus I seemed to soar out of my bodily organs into a new existence. All sensation van-

ished: I no longer breathed; yet I seemed to feel no need of vital air. My heart lay still; but its hushed pulses gave me no pain. I no longer bore the burden of a weary body: it was as though I had become incorporeal, and had passed out of the world of matter into that of spirit.

I said to myself, "This is death!" but the thought found no echo on my lips—they would not give forth one sound. Then I knew more clearly the change that had taken place. It seemed at first that I was really dead—become a disembodied spirit. Yet my soul was not free from the clay which it no longer had power to animate into living and breathing man. It roved hither and thither, within its lost tabernacle, and could not flee away. My brain yet maintained power of thought and perception; through it I heard, and saw, and felt, though my outward senses were benumbed. Then, when the first delicious torpor had gone by, there came upon me a vague horror. Could it be that I was dead, yet not dead—a tranced body tenanted by a living soul? Was this my fearful doom?

It broke upon me with the first sound conveyed by my incorporeal senses—the cry of my wife Lilies! Then I heard—what no man on earth ever heard before the wail of his beloved over his own dead corse!

---



## CHAPTER III.

IN a dark cabin—around all coldness, silence, death—they left me; *me*, still me, for the eternal essence had not quitted, could not quit, its clay tenement. I knew all they did to me—the demons, with that arch-demon looking on, smiling at his horrible work! I felt it all—my palsied limbs being straightened, the dead-weights laid on my eyes, my helpless hands decently composed;—with my spirit's senses I saw and heard every whit, and yet my corporeal life was gone. Wonder, rage, terror, swept over my soul as vainly as blasts over a frozen lake—no sound, no movement, enabled the bodily organs to reflect the mind; I had power over them no more.

The German with his fellow-ministers left me, and I lay wrapped in terrible repose. I, of all human flesh, was the first who had *felt death*. There was a marvel, a mystery, even a pride, in this awful thought. I shrouded myself in it, and, piercing through the terror and the gloom, my soul went travelling over every phase of wild speculation. I, the immortal, indivisible *I*, looked down almost pityingly upon that poor atom of helpless mortality that was myself. It was a dear self—dear, with all its imperfections; for it was the human form which Lilius held precious, even beautiful. The pale, powerless head she had cherished on her bosom; the cold, nerveless hands had lain, hour after hour, enfolded tenderly in hers.

They were so folded once more; but it was the frenzied clasp of the widow, not the wife.

She came—Lilias, my beloved; her footsteps sounded through the stillness of the death-chamber; her sobs pierced the darkness of the desolate night. Oh, fearful spell! that not even such a cry could break!

I knew her hand was upon my pulseless heart; I knew her kisses were showered on my dumb lips; yet I could not answer; no more than the corpse which I appeared. A veil, far wider than that between the dead and the living, was drawn between me and the beloved of my soul. How I longed to rend at once the feeble thread that linked me to mortality, and pass—through any agony, soever great—into the state of a disembodied spirit. Then, perchance, I might hold communion with her, as the departed are sometimes permitted to do.

She would not believe that the life had entirely gone from my poor shrouded form. She wrapped the cold hands in her bosom; she laid her cheek beside mine on the same pillow; and so, weeping bitterly until her strength failed, she fell asleep. But she awoke soon, calling wildly on my name. Oh God! I would have almost perilled the immortal soul Thou gavest me to answer her. Why, thou Divine, didst Thou make this terrible human love so strong?

Lilias, shuddering, let my hands fall. *When they fell*, impassive as clay, she uttered a cry such as would almost have broken a death-slumber. It could not break mine.

She seized the lamp, and held it so that the light fell on my face. There was one start, one gasping sigh, and then she stood calm. Over her terror, her grief,

her despair, had passed the awful peace given by the presence of Death.

She laid down the light, moving slowly, with hushed steps. Then she came, and knelt down, not by my pillow, but at the couch's foot. She kissed me no more, she clasped me no more; I was no longer her living husband, I was the solemn image of Death. That image froze her human love into mute awe. Her tears ceased, her sobs were stilled. For a moment she hid her face as if to shut out from sight the dead face, once so beloved; and then she paused. It was beloved still! But as she gazed, there was in her look less of passionate earthly love than of the sublime yet awful tenderness with which one would behold an angel of God or a departed soul.

After a while, Liliás lifted her voice and prayed—the widow's first prayer. Yet it began with a thanksgiving. She thanked Heaven for all I had been to her; for the love which had awakened her girlhood's soul, calling into life its strength, joy, and beauty; for the blessed fate which had worked out, in due time, that love's fulfilment, so that every dower of her rich heart might be poured in a full tide on him who was its awakener. No murmurings were there for the love taken away; but blessings for the love that *had been*.

"And thou, my husband!" she cried, "my own beloved! who art not here, not in this form lying cold before me, but now standing a spirit among the immortal ones, glorious and beautiful as they, forsake me not! Live thou in my heart; change this human anguish into

a memory peaceful and divine ! Love me, love me, up in heaven as I love thee on earth ! Oh, thou who wert—who art—my soul's soul, through life and *after*, what shall part thee from me ! ”

She looked—not down towards the pale figure beside which she knelt, but upwards into heaven. Thither her lifted hands were stretched, thither her eyes were turned ; and I, yet prisoned in that dull clay, mourned not that she regarded it no more, but rejoiced in the immortal strength and purity of the devotion which had loved, not my poor dying body, but *me*.

There came faces and voices to the door, and Liliās arose. She arose, not the weeping, broken-hearted girl, stricken and desolate, but the widow of the dead—calm, patient, almost sublime in her sorrow. Many pitying friends gathered round her ; there was only one which stole in the rear, glaring at her and at me from amidst his gray elf-locks—the Destroyer—who had worked upon us this doom.

They besought Liliās to take some rest ; but she meekly refused. Covering my face, she took her seat at the head of what she deemed her husband's corpse ; and there remained, motionless and mute, a solemn watcher over the living Dead. At last, her human strength yielded to this weight of woe ; she sank down, slowly, slowly, on the breast that could shelter her no more. Falling thence she lay a dull, unconscious heap on the cabin floor.

*It* marked her, even there, that flaming, fiendish eye. It watched her everywhere—her and me. Creeping

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snake-like into the chamber, the Mystic gathered her in his foul clutch, indifferently, as though that precious form had been some victim slain by his hand. He bore her away, with a triumphant smile ; and I, her husband, bound in adamantine bonds, lay a living spirit prisoned in a dead corse.

Again I was alone. The wind rose, and the ship rocked madly on the deep. I, lying there, might have been a stone. All sense, all power, was dead within me. Only the brain was alive—alive with sight, and sound, and perception. Phantom after phantom rose, peopling the vessel's hold. They danced in the darkness, like motes in a sunbeam ; they shrieked in the blast, a whirlwind of unearthly voices ; they filled the very air, the air that I had once breathed.

Thus I lay amidst these horrors, until a human presence, more demon-like than themselves, put them to flight. The German Mystic came and stood over his victim.

Love had been powerless to unloose the spell ; how then should Hate have strength to break it ? I, who would have heaped worlds upon worlds to crush my enemy, soul and body, into ashes—was doomed to lie still as a sleeping babe, while his cursed fingers wandered over my dead heart, my sunken pulse ; while, in his ghastly mirth, he bent my helpless limbs, making me assume mocking attitudes of life.

At last, he dropped upon my lips some liquid, and my tongue felt itself unloosed. I howled upon him imprecations, threatenings, prayers ; but he only smiled !

I shrieked, until I thought the sound might pierce to the ocean's depths; and still he only smiled.

"Poor deceived one, it is vain!" he cried: "thy voice rings no louder than the sigh of a summer wind. No human ear could hear it, save mine, which is deaf as the rock. I must work my will."

He laid his finger on my lips, and they were sealed as with an iron band. He began to speak once more.

"Listen, thou dumb one who hearest all! Against thee I bear no malice, no revenge; thou art but my instrument to work out the great end. Through thee I must find the Happy Isles. Thou, whose bliss on earth seemed so secure that it took from thee all desire for heaven—thou art the one chosen for this work. Therefore, I must send thee—a living, trance-bound human soul—to the place where the dead lie; to the unfathomable depth of the great sea, that there, perchance, thou mayst discover the way to the Land of Immortality."

At this my soul within me sent up a cry, such as might have risen to the crystal walls of heaven when the Son of the Morning fell. But it could not pass my frozen lips.

"Patience, poor struggler against destiny!" answered that voice of doom, and yet it now seemed not fierce but pitiful, even mild. "Is it so hard that thou, who hast been most blessed—who, loved and loving, hast found earth a very heaven—shouldst sacrifice a few years more of an existence that haply may soon become

wretched as mine, in order that a fellow-being, equal to thyself in all but happiness, may exchange a life which to him has been a long torture, for rest and peace?"

His voice became plaintive, nay, humble. But I saw only the hand that rent from me love, hope, life, and I cursed him still.

"I hear thy unspoken thoughts," he replied. "But they avail not. Thou hast no pity on me—me on whom neither God nor man ever took pity. Thou hast no tenderness for thy brother-man, towards whom the human eye was never turned in love. Now, then, I stand as an avenger. I make thee a sacrifice for all the suffering and outcast of thy kind. Thou shalt go first, and find out the pathway on which they may follow to the land of peace. It is just, and I am a righteous instrument to fulfil this doom. The time is at hand."

While he spoke the hurricane rose louder and louder, and amidst its boomings came the din of clamorous voices, calling aloud that the dead should be brought forth. The sea would not rest, they said, until it had received its lawful prey.

The Mystic met them at the cabin door. "It shall be done now, at once, while the widow sleeps. Poor mourner! It will save her one parting pang the less."

He was a demon incarnate, with that cast-down eye—that silvery tongue!

They swathed me—*me*—living *me*, in the cerements

of the grave; they bore me, a loathed weight, to the poop. There, out in the midnight blackness, they stood, unconscious murderers; *he* leading them on. Above the howl of the seething waves, I heard his low voice breathing the mockery of a funeral prayer. A lifting up—a plunge—and I sank down, down—into the yawning ocean-hell.

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## CHAPTER IV.

I BELIEVE that death itself—the real parting of soul and body—is less horrible than many tortures, not only mental but corporeal, which we endure during life. Many a man has dreamed that he was dying—has felt vividly all the circumstances of that supreme hour—the gradual ebbing away of existence, or the passing suddenly from life into eternity. May it not be that this kind of dream, in which we rarely suffer any pain, whether seeming to die slowly or by violence, is but the striving of the spirit within us to foreshadow the moment of its departure; to make known, in the only possible way, the solemn secret which none who have passed death's portals can ever return to unfold?

Thus I died, if death it could be called, as softly, as painlessly, as one dies in dreams. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” the change came. I sank down, down into an abyss of blackness, silence, and nothingness! and then I rose up—rose like a bird,

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or a cloud in the air. I beheld light, I heard sounds. I felt a life within me; richer, fuller, than any human life. Around me was neither void, nor spiritual heaven, nor terrible hell. It was earth—earth purified into Paradise.

I stood on the shore of the Happy Isles!

As the sunshine of that blessed land fell on me, my grave-cerements seemed to melt off like misty robes of air. With them melted the icy spell which had bound me. Once again I moved and breathed like living man—like that man of men who rose up beneath the finger of God from the life-pregnant dust of Eden.

As glorious as Eden itself was the land whereon I stood. Words cannot picture it. Perchance you may form the best image of its beauty, when you look up at those cloud landscapes which grow visible on summer-eves, and talk to your little son at your knee about the heavenly country which he dreams is something like that which his young eyes behold in the pictured sky. No other earthly similitude can approach so near to this vision of the Happy Isles.

Around them the sea folded itself like a girdle, a crystal circle, encompassing them with wide and loving arms, like Infinity. For there, Infinity and Eternity, the great mysteries into which the deepest and purest human faith cannot pierce without trembling, became near and familiar things. Still, the land was not heaven, but earth—earth with its curse

taken away, and made pure and beautiful as it was in the Eden-time.

I walked with human feet along the lovely shore. I gazed with human eyes upon the view beyond—a region of pastoral, untrodden beauty, blue hills rising sky-wards, feathered down to the very strand with trees. The land, though unlike any which I had known on earth, was such as I had pictured many a time in fancy, when dreaming over that time of which Homer and Hesiod sung—the time when Hellas, the garden of the young world, was trodden by gods, demi-gods, and heroes.

It seemed that I beheld the golden age of Greece. On these purple hills the Latmian shepherd might have roved—amidst these thick woods Oreads and Dryads might have made their happy bowers. The sea itself, azure-shining and crystal-clear, seemed to catch its brightness from myriads of Nereid-eyes below, and the breeze that went sighing by was less an earth-wind than the audible breath of Zephyrus over his goddess-love.

Now I discerned the beauty of those ancient myths—suited to the time when the world was in its childhood, and needed to be taught by childish parables—which spiritualized all nature in poetic symbols, and filled the whole earth with the dim presence of half-understood Divinity.

I, too, felt within myself the spirit of the golden age. I was a Greek. I bounded over the strand, my bosom swelling with immortal fire—such as the great

and glorious Titan poured into the soul of man. Life, young life, leaped in my veins; not that dull current transfused through eighteen hundred years—but the rich flood, sensuous yet pure, which coursed through the grand frames of the ancient heroes. I walked, I leaped, I ran; feeling no longer the pain and weakness of the body I had once borne, but a strength and beauty akin to that of the conqueror Theseus, or the goddess-born son of Peleus.

Up from the sea-shore, across a sloping hill—such an one as might have blossomed beneath the footsteps of Paris and his woodland bride, ere Enone's wail had made fair Ida itself a place of desolation—up, higher and higher, I climbed; until from the hill summit I looked down on the scene below.

It was a deep vale, amphitheatred by forest and mountain. There, as in a nest of peace, dwelt the beings who peopled this new world; I saw them already—not with narrow human vision, but with an eye that seemed at once to behold and to know. They were human in semblance—in beauty superhuman. Their speech was music; their smile was sunshine: their very presence was an atmosphere of joy. But it was a joy such as immortals feel—calm, deep, tranquil. They had the power, never known on earth, to look on the noon-day sun of happiness with undazzled and unblinded eyes.

I stood on the mountain-top, and stretched forth my arms with a gesture of glad and yearning desire. The rising sun cast my shadow, dark and grand in its giant

outline, upon the Happy Vale. Then I heard arising a billowy sound of many voices, swelling into a hymn. It came pealing on in the majestic cadences of Homer's tongue, and its burthen evermore ran thus:—

“Rejoice, rejoice! Another mortal has reached the Happy Isles!”

Winding up from the valley, the graceful procession neared me. Old men advanced first, rich in the beauty of age—for age has beauty as well as youth. Wisdom, peace, and tranquil thought, dwelt on each grave brow; the light of their eyes, though dimmed, was not obscure. Life's evening descended upon them in gray-clouded peace, bringing no regret nor fear.

Next came women—aged matrons, with their children's children clinging to their robes; young mothers, to whom mother-love was unmingled with fear, for their offspring would go down to the grave—if graves were here—sinless as on the day of birth. Then advanced Manhood—strong, mighty in stature, the perfect type of physical beauty, ennobled by the indwelling beauty of the soul. After this full development of humanity came young men and maidens, meek, tender, modest, who carried in their bosoms the rose of love; but it was a thornless rose. Last of all were seen the children—infant buds, wherein lay folded the perfect man.

These all cried aloud, with one voice of jubilant song, “Welcome! welcome to the Happy Isles!”

In the midst of them I passed on to the centre of the vale—a palace of verdure, branch-roofed, and fretted

overhead with azure and gold—the blue sky and the darting sunlight. There was seen no work of men's hands.

Neither was there a throne—the ruler stood among his people like a father among his children. His only show of sovereignty was that which nature stamped upon his mien and gesture. These tokens pointed silently, “Behold a king among men!”

He *was* a king! I felt it as I looked upon him. He stood among them, loftiest in stature, grandest in beauty. It was meet that he should be so, for in this perfect land the symbol and the reality were one; the outward manifestation was complete as the inward truth. Therefore this kingly soul shone forth through a kingly semblance.—The temple was worthy of the god.

I say *god*, because there was something god-like in him. Perhaps the best type by which I can embody him is the Phidian Jove—but it was Jove unthroned, uncrowned, save by the circumfluent presence of his own deity.

I bowed myself before him, even to the ground, and my soul within me bowed likewise. He raised me, repeating the words of the choral salutation, “Stranger, whomsoever thou art, welcome to the Happy Isles!”

I have often thought that if there be one physical manifestation in which the indwelling divinity of manhood most shows itself, it is the human voice. From the moment I heard his voice I could have worshipped at the feet of that king. In its majestic sweetness was

a pensive under-tone; speaking of endurance, but endurance sublimated into peace—of wisdom, but wisdom made holy by meekness—of power, but power softened by love.

“O thou Greatest One,” I cried, “tell me—who art thou?”

He smiled: his smile was like that of Jove, which makes earth to laugh in sunshine.

“Askest thou this? Then, thou art not yet equal with us; but I will make thee so.”

He placed one hand on my brow, the other on my heart; and his eyes looked solemnly into mine. An influence seemed to pass into my soul, raising me to a higher state of being. Hitherto, my existence had been one of mere sensation, like Adam’s with the tree of wisdom untasted. In the deepest and most delicious sense, I had learned *to feel*—I now learned *to know*.

I sank before him, crying out,—

“Thou art the greatest, the wisest, of ancient heroes, the bold adventurer into unknown seas. Hail Ulysses, King of Ithaca!”

The monarch lifted his head with a noble pride.

“I *was* King of Ithaca; I *am* Ulysses. That name, which the Divine Spirit caused to be much honoured on earth, follows me here. My petty kingdom is forgotten; but Ulysses, the true Ulysses, reigns in the Happy Isles. And thou, O man! tell us,—for our knowledge extends not beyond these lands,—whence comest thou?”

I strove to answer the question; but a thick oblivion

seemed to have gathered over my past life: only, as I gazed listlessly on the crowd that watched me with curious eyes, I saw two young lovers stand, leaning in each other's arms. The sight brought a passing gleam of remembrance, and then a sharp pang of regret.

"O King! all is dim with me; but it seems that I have been happy—have known love. I cannot rest, even here. Let me go back to earth once more."

"Is it even so?" And he cast on me a look of sublime compassion. "Drink peace and oblivion with the dews of the Happy Isles!"

He drew me beneath the spreading branches, and shook from them a shower of pearly drops, which fell, sweet as honey, on my lips and brow. As they touched me, I ceased to suffer and regret, and became altogether blessed.

I sat at the feet of the wisest of the Greeks while he judged his people. Little need of judgment was there, when there was no crime, and only enough of cloudy sorrow to show more clearly the eternal sunshine of happiness around them. They gathered round their king, drinking wisdom from his lips, and learning the few arts and sciences that their rich world needed. He blessed the young, he counselled those of maturer years, he spoke peace to the aged. As they departed each their several ways, I inwardly marvelled at many things concerning them, which even now seemed a mystery.

“Ulysses,” I cried; “I, too, would fain learn of thee!”

The king bent his head in acquiescence.

“Tell me, then, of these thy people—did they journey with thee to the sunset? And if so, how is it that some are young, some aged? Is there birth and death here?”

He led me to a little distance, where stood a magnificent tree. Its branches bore at once foliage, flowers, and fruit. Of its leaves, some wore the tender green of spring, some the gold or ruddy hue of autumn; and as they fell—for they did fall—each, touching the earth, became a seedling plant, and so recommenced a new and different existence.

“Here,” said the sage, “as the life of a tree, is the life of men: peacefully flow their fourscore years and ten; then they bid adieu to those they love, fall calmly asleep, and in that slumber the soul passes from the worn-out body into that of a new-born babe. Thus it is with the native dwellers in this land.”

“But with those thou leddest from Greece, and with thyself?” I asked, gazing on the majestic form of perfect manhood, on which no added year might have passed since Calypso’s immortal eyes, tear-dimmed, watched it disappear along the island-shore.

The Ithacan answered,—

“Men’s souls differ from one another in greatness. I and my followers, though mortal, bore within us the germ of immortality, which gave us will to seek, and strength to find, the Happy Isles. Therefore, it needed



not for us to pass through a succession of lives in order to attain perfection. We are already perfect."

"Then to thee and thine comes no change; but the body, now made the complete manifestation of the soul, is immortal as itself?"

"Even so. Now, come hither and behold!"

Still following him, I entered a pleasant glade, thick sown with amaranth and asphodel. Through it ran murmuring a little stream, in whose mirror looked the pale flower that wastes for love of its own image.

There was neither sun nor moon; but the whole atmosphere was pervaded with a serene twilight, like that of the dawn of day. It showed the quiet vale, and the countenances of those who dwelt therein. They were men of various mien; but over all was spread the same air of purity, happiness, and rest. The stalwart soldier leaned on his useless weapons; the poet, sitting on the flower-enamelled grass, sang his innocent songs, happy as a little child; the sage, lying calmly beneath the tree-shadows, found his deepest wisdom in the enjoyment of perfect peace.

It was a picture of the world's sinless infancy, when it lay, as a babe does, soul and body alike wrapped in slumbrous stillness. Would an awakening come? Or was this the culmination of existence?

As the idea crossed my spirit, I looked upon my guide. His face, too, wore the same expression—that of a soul which, desiring nought, or else having nought to desire, finds its struggles and sufferings merged into entire contentment.

In this Elysium, there seemed to be no future;—but was there a past? I turned unto the king, and said,—

“Tell me, Ulysses, have these all drunk of the Lethe dew, and lost the memory of their former life?”

“No!” he answered; “but they see it pictured dimly and painlessly like a remembered dream.”

“And thou?”

His countenance shone with sublime triumph.

“To me the past is sweet as the remembrance of toil in rest: I look on it calmly, rejoicingly, as the victor of the goal looks back on the ended race.”

So saying, the Ithacan turned from the entrance of the vale, and went on, I following his footsteps, to the margin of the sea.

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#### CHAPTER V.

ON the verge of the strand Ulysses stood, and looked towards the vast ocean which had served as a pathway to his hero-feet. It kissed them now in tiny wavelets, obediently acknowledging his sovereignty. The moist touch seemed laden with some passing memories of earth; for the king stretched forth his arms and cried—

“Oh, life long past! oh, toils long conquered! oh, land long forsaken! must I then remember ye once more?”

He leaned against an overhanging rock: I crouch-

ing on the silver sands at his feet, looked up with wonder and reverence to the face of the son of Laertes.

“Wisest of the Greeks—” I began.

“Thou sayest right,” interrupted he. “I *was* the wisest of the Greeks. The great gods poured wisdom into my soul when I yet hung upon the bosom of Anticlea. As a child, I yearned for the might and energy of youth; as a youth, I desired to attain the full knowledge of man. But when manhood came, the sceptre of Laertes only cumbered my hands; and the petty realm of Ithaca confined my soul.

“The wise men said to me, ‘Son of Laertes, waste not thy strength in idle dreaming. Emulate Hercules and Theseus: take in thine hand arrow and spear, and rid the land of monsters.’ And the young men whispered, ‘Go forth with us, let us fight against men, and take captive fair women; this is glory.’ But I knew that both voices were false: I felt within me something beyond the glory of the hunter or the warrior. So I stayed, vainly chafing at the limits of the narrow island.

“At last a vision came to me—‘Go,’ it said, ‘wed the daughter of Jove—Helen—most beautiful of all the women of earth. Mingle thy mortal blood with that of divinity, and thou shalt become thyself divine.’ I believed the deceitful dream, self-created out of the longings of unsatisfied youth; I went and stood with the princes of Greece at the court of Tyndarus.”

Ulysses paused: and I, whose memory, while a blank

as regarded my own past, went side by side with that of the mighty Ithacan—cried: “Tell me of that perfect type of woman—the ideal of beauty to the ancient world—tell me of Helen of Troy.”

“Helen of *Lacedæmon* rises before me now,” answered Ulysses. “She stands veiled at the foot of the throne. Around her are the young warriors, thirsting with ambition and eager love. Love! what was love to me? I sought not the fairest woman in Greece, but the being, Jove-born, whose embrace might impart unto my mortality the power and wisdom of the god.

“The veil was lifted: Helen stood revealed. The warriors knelt entranced before her. Fools! to mistake that incarnation of voluptuous human beauty for the divine Woman, the child of Jove! I turned away, half in sorrow, half in scorn, and wooed no more the daughter of Leda.”

“But the son of Laertes returned not without a bride,” I said, earnestly regarding the face of the king. Wisdom sat there—placid yet stern, unbending firmness, and indomitable will; but there was no sign of human tenderness. I saw that in the great Ithacan’s soul an insatiable thirst for knowledge had filled the place of love.

He answered carelessly:—“My people said it was meet a woman should sit by the hearth of Ulysses, to tend the age of Anticlea, and bring up sons to mount Laertes’ throne. So Penelope sailed with me in the black ships to Ithaca.”

There was a silence—during which the little waves sang their under-melody, until it grew into the boom of the rising tide. The sea dashed and foamed against the rocks that confined it; and its loud roar sounded mournful even in the Happy Isles.

Ulysses beheld, and a new spirit dawned in his majestic eyes. “Child of the after world,” he cried, turning suddenly round, “thou seest in that sea the image of my soul. It would not—could not stay murmuring among the golden sands: it must rise and rise, even though it dashed itself howling upon the bitter rocks. I sat, an enslaved king, upon my paltry throne, holding sway over the human beasts—for they were soulless as beasts—to whom the purple and the diadem made me appear divine; I ruled them, and then scorned myself for stooping to such a dominion. Why was I thus pent up within the limits of my narrow isle?—I for whose aspirings the world itself appeared too bounded and too small.”

“Yet,” I answered him, timorously and softly, “when the summons came, the monarch of Ithaca used his wisdom for a stratagem, rather than depart with those who warred for Helen, against Troy. Why did the kingly warrior pretend madness, and sow salt on the sea-shore?”

A look, as like human anger as that immortal face could assume, darkened the brow of the king. “Because the folly of mankind forced greatness itself to cunning. Was it meet that Ulysses, gifted in the wisdom of the gods, should go forth with a barbarian race to quarrel

over an adulterous woman? But fate is stronger than human will: and so I, with my twelve ships, sailed for the Phrygian shore."

"And thou wert among the mightiest there?"

"I was *the* mightiest! Wisdom is greater than valour. It was I who ruled the wavering Agamemnon, and led the virgin-sacrifice to Aulis. I, by my counsels, caused the destruction of Troy."

As he spoke, there came before my mind's eye a vision of the pillaged city, the murdered Priam, the aged Hecuba grovelling in her children's gore. And I said, mournfully, "Alas, for Troy!"

The face of Ulysses expressed neither triumph nor compassion, as he answered. "Troy fell: it was destined that she should fall. The will of the Supreme must be accomplished. The world's tide must swell onward, whether men, cities, or kingdoms, lie engulfed in its course. Greece learned wisdom from that ten years' miserable war; and from the ravaged town may have arisen a new and a greater Ilion."

"It has—it has!" I answered, thinking of Eneas whose descendants builded Rome, and longing to impart the knowledge to which the wisest of the ancient world had not attained. But his impassive look asked it not. The perfection of his Elysium seemed to be, *never to desire*. Instead of speaking of a future which to him was indifferent, I pursued my questions concerning the past.

"Great Ulysses! to thy ten years before Troy succeeded another period of greater glory still—the glory

of endurance. Let me bow, heart and soul, before the patient wanderer over many seas, the hero struggling with destiny, conquering alike the jaws of Scylla and the Sirens' song—enslaved neither by fear, ambition, nor love ;” and here I paused, doubtful, remembering fair Circe's isle.

But the king answered unmoved. “If ever love subdued me, it was an immortal's love, which I thought might lift my being and endow it with something divine. But even Circe's charms were laid at my feet : I sought them not. And the winds that wafted our flying ship from the enchanted isle, testified that wisdom and virtue were dearer to Ulysses than the clasp of a goddess's imploring arms.”

“Yet when the end was gained, the travail past, and the son of Laertes reached his native land, did that wisdom and virtue find their perfect fruition in happiness and peace? Else wherefore did thy bold feet quit for ever the Ithacan shore?”

Ulysses advanced a few paces, and lifted his hand in the attitude of speech. He stood as he might have stood before the throne of Agamemnon, his lips dropping words sweet as honey, but strong and all-subduing as the wine which Hebe poured out for Jove.

“I was a man before my age. I discerned faintly a higher life than that of brute warfare and sensual pleasure, and turned with loathing from my brethren. I sought this diviner life everywhere—in the renown of battle, in the purer glory of travails conquered, in

the delights of a goddess's love. But wisdom, which is alone happiness, ever flitted before me like a vain shadow : it was no nearer to me in Circe's or Calypso's island than in the gore-encrusted fields of Troy. So I turned my footsteps and sought it in my own home. I gave laws to my people ; I taught them the lore of distant lands ; I stooped my warrior's hand to guide the plough and melt the ore ; I spoke of that wisdom which is better than physical prowess—of peace, which is more glorious than war."

"And they rewarded thee?"

"They muttered among themselves that fame had lied, and that the returned Ulysses was the same madman and coward whom their fathers had seen sowing the shore with salt. And throughout the isle men lived like brutes ; each lifting his hand against his brother, as though Ulysses had never reigned in Ithaca."

"Alas !" I murmured. "Woe for him who is the herald of a coming age ! But surely there was peace and content by the hearth of the returned spouse, the noble father, the duteous son ? Surely there was rest for thee amidst thy kindred ?"

He replied, calmly as ever ; "A great man often finds no kindred but the gods. So it was with me and mine. I walked with them ; I was not of them. Laertes looked on me and marvelled, as Typhon might have done at the monster offspring which called him sire. Anticlea 'was not.' Pale shade of mother-love, thou at least in thy solemn Hades hadst



acknowledged thy Ulysses! Telemachus, dull follower of a past age's lore, with nought of fiery youth save its presumption, sought to guide into safe proprieties the errant sceptre held by his father's daring hand. Good he was—tender too; but the aged eagle despises the filial cares of the hooded crow. Ulysses was alone still.”

“ Yet Penelope?” I began inquiringly.

“ Penelope sat by the hearth and span.”

In that one sentence, where the only reproach was indifference, I read the sole atoning plea for the husband who once more quitted, and for ever, a wife faithful for twenty years. I saw before me the fair dull embodiment of virtuous inanities, fulfilling the lifeless round of conjugal and maternal duty, scared with horror at the bold soul that, over-leaping the world's boundary of assumed right and wrong, would fain dive for itself into the mysteries of the divine and the true. I knew how it was that not even the coldly - faithful Penelope could keep her lord within the bounds of Ithaca.

“ But,” I cried, “ tell me how the end came; and how it was that thou and thy crew set sail for the Happy Isles?”

Ulysses paused, and a rapt expression, which might be either memory or prophecy, arose in his eyes, which were fixed on the distant cloud-hung main.

“ I see my palace, as on that day of brutal feasting, when, moved to scorn and wrath, I stood in the midst, and called them beasts. They proved the justice

of the name. They rose up against the hand that fed them: they would have torn asunder the only true man in Ithaca. Cowards! I hear their howling now. I see the white face of my son Telemachus, pleading caution, expediency, while on the other hand arise Penelope's weak railings against her rude, iron-hearted lord, whom she deemed the cause of all. But I stood up, among fools and beasts, A MAN—the man who had conquered gods and monsters, earth and hell—Ulysses."

"And Ulysses was victor once more," I cried eagerly.

"Go, ask the Ithacans, if Ithaca yet exist, concerning the aged monarch, whose age was more glorious than their puling youth. With me, to fight was to conquer. I crushed them like dust under my sceptre, and then I cast it among them—I would be no more their king."

"What followed?"

"I gathered from far and wide those tried companions of my ancient glory who yet breathed the upper air; neither them nor me did the dull world understand. Gladly they arose at their chieftain's summons—gladly they prepared to follow Ulysses to the West. Once more the old ship rocked in the bay, and on every aged cheek the sea-wind blew, alluring with delicious hope across the unknown wave. Thus Ulysses departed."

"But it was in peace?"

"Ay, in peace! From the tomb of Laertes to the strand did the crawling slaves track these footsteps,

even with acclamations. The new-crowned head of Telemachus was bent for my blessing, and Penelope herself followed me to the shore. Her countenance expressed demure regret, but her eyes were bright, and not with tears. I saw that ere the prow had turned from the land, she likewise had turned away, hurrying joyfully to where the released people cried, 'Long live the King Telemachus!' He *was* a meet king for them."

"Even so, O great Ulysses! And thou—"

"I looked on Ithaca no more; but stretched my sail towards the boundless expanse of waters, where I might attain my full desire. So the shore faded from us for ever, and we sailed on and on, night and day, towards the sunset, until we reached the Happy Isles."

As Ulysses ceased, the sublime calm of his countenance deepened more and more. There was scarcely need for the question that burst from my lips—

"And they are, indeed, the *Happy Isles*? Thou art perfectly blessed?"

"Seest thou not I am," replied the king. "Here all desires are fulfilled—we have wisdom, peace, virtue, glory, together with every delight of sense exalted into purity. We have no longings unattained—we live a life like that of childhood, one delicious present."

"But the future?" I said, as a doubt crossed my mind—a doubt that was not reflected in the countenance of Ulysses.

"I understand not thy words," he said.

"Dost thou desire nought—expect nought? Is there not even here a something beyond—an Infinite, whereunto the soul may lift itself—a perpetual Future?"

"What is the Future?" said the king's calm voice.

Then I knew that I was in an Elysium where there was no to-morrow. My spirit, born in later time, possessed a power greater than that of the greatest in the elder world—their heaven was sensuous delight and rest; mine —?

I knew not, as yet, what it was, or in what sphere of being. I only knew that I was different from those among whom I moved. As Ulysses left me, passing with slow, majestic footsteps across the shining sands, I felt that there was something wanting even in this Paradise. The sea appeared no longer a loving guard, but a crystal barrier, awful even in its beauty. And when the moon rose—looming out of the waters like a thing of life, coming from—*whither?*—there rushed back upon me the eternal secret, the thirst for the mysterious Beyond.

I lay beneath the shadow of the rock, immersed in thoughts too deep to belong to the Happy Isles, but appertaining to another state of existence. Whether that existence had been, or was to be, I knew not. The moon climbed higher in the heavens, spanning the far sea with a glimmering bridge of light: it drew nearer and nearer, until it reached my very feet—a silver pathway leading——was it to Infinity or Nothingness?

Should I arise and follow? The impulse dawned,

strengthened, grew into a madness. The Island of the Blest, the peaceful vale—all faded from me. I yearned for something to hope for—something yet to come. I looked at that unsubstantial, dazzling line, and then at my own material frame, which, though spiritualized and made beautiful, bore yet a human likeness. Dare I walk the waves with mortal feet?

I dare! for each earthly particle is interpenetrated with my immortal soul. Faith, and Will, and Infinite Desire, can accomplish all things.

I turned one look on the beautiful land, sleeping beneath the curtain of night—then I set my foot on the living line of radiance.

That immortal pathway sustained my immortal feet! On it I walked over the fathomless abyss, on, on——whither?

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## CHAPTER VI.

OUT into the dim obscure, guided and sustained only by that slender moonlight line, I passed without fear. As I went, olden thoughts entered my mind; and this strange journey seemed a shadowing of something on earth—some wild ocean of fate, to be crossed by one pale ray.

Gradually the moon set, and the path was gone!

I felt it vanish from beneath my feet—with the darkness came imminent death! I cried out aloud, and the

cry brought to me the knowledge that I had passed into another sphere of being—for, lo! in my despair I called upon God—the Christian's God!

At once, in a moment, the abyss of darkness was ablaze with light, showing me that I had almost reached the land. Looking up, I saw on the near shore a palace whose splendour lightened the whole isle, and glimmered even on the waves. But amidst these waves I was struggling still. I saw afar off life, safety, bliss, and yet Death was ready to engulf me.

There rose to my lips words faintly remembered as being known of old, solemn and holy—

*“What shall I do to be saved!”*

But still around me the greedy waves hissed and roared. Then the cry at my heart changed to one humble, helpless, yet not hopeless—

*“Lord, what wilt Thou do, that I may be saved?”*

Instantly I saw a light boat crossing the seething waters. In it stood a youth, pale, beautiful; serene and holy of mien as he who abode at Patmos—the beloved apostle John. Again I cried, and the answer was—

*“Brother, peace! Help is near.”*

Then, his blessed hands lifted me out of that yawning grave, and I sank before him—saved!

He made on my forehead the sign of the cross, saying—

*“Welcome, brother! This is the island of Avillion, where dwell many good Christian knights, with those knights of Faërie who serve God, and believe in His*

word. I, too, abide among them, because my life on earth was spent in faith and purity, and in the quest of the Sangreal."

"Who then art thou, my preserver?"

The youth put aside his shining helmet, looking upward a holy yet humble joy.

"I am Galahad, the only one of King Arthur's knights to whom God gave strength and patience to find the holy Greal."

As he spoke, the boat touched the strand. He signed me with the cross once more, leaped on the shore, and disappeared.

"Oh, leave me not!" I cried. "Good knight and true, I need thy guidance even here! How shall I tread alone the unknown isle; how enter the shining palace?"

And I looked tremblingly at the castle where dwelt King Arthur and Morgue la Faye; I knew it was so; for now all my prescience came back upon me, even as in the Island of Ulysses. But while I gazed, not daring to approach the presence of so great a hero, that which I had deemed a king's palace became a temple of the King of Kings. From the cathedral windows gleamed the altar lights, which I knew were burning round the Sangreal; and through the wide-opened doors came the holy matin-hymn, lifted ere yet the sky was purple with dawn. "*Dilexi quoniam*" began the psalm; and as it proceeded, verse after verse pealed on my heart and memory.

"*The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of*

*hell gat hold upon me. . . . Then called I upon the name of the Lord. . . .*

*“Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.*

*“I will walk before the Lord in the light of the living.”*

I entered the open temple-gate, and paid my vows at the threshold of the King of Heaven.

From thence I passed amid the train of worshippers—men and women, Christian knights, and ladies pure and fair—to the presence of Arthur and Morgue la Faye. They sat together on a throne, alike, and yet unlike; for she was the most beauteous dame in the whole land of Faërie, while on the face of her mortal brother lingered still the traces of his long warfare on earth. Yet he was a noble king to behold; and as he sat leaning upon Excalibur, his fair hair falling on either side his broad forehead, and his limbs showing grand and giant-like through his garments' folds, I felt rising within me the same ardour which had impelled so many brave knights to fight, bleed, or die, for Arthur of Britain.

Around the presence-chamber were grouped the most noted of the dwellers in Avillion. I beheld and knew them all. Side by side stood the two bold adventurers from the land of the Cymri, who sailed westward in search of the *Gwerdonnan Lian*—the Green Isles of the Ocean—and returned no more; Prince Madoc, and Merlin, the mightiest sage of those early days. Afar from these, half hid in a delicious



twilight shadow, Sir Launfal, the pure and faithful knight, lay resting at the feet of the beloved Tryamour. Near the throne leaned Ogier le Danois, the valiant and pious, who at his birth was chosen by Morgue la Faye to be her *loyal amoureux*. He ever kept at her side, looking up into her calm, queen-like eyes, and ready to obey her lightest behest, as true knight should for the sake of his dear ladye. But apart from all, kneeling in a little oratory, I saw Sir Galahad. His face was turned eastward, and the early sunbeams fell around his head like a glory. It seemed like the smile of God's love resting first and nearest upon him who on earth had loved God only.

Concealed behind the massive pillars which sustained the hall, I beheld all these, and then felt, piercing even to my hiding-place, the eagle glance of Arthur the king.

"Come forth!" he said. "Whence art thou?"

I answered trembling; for his voice was loud and deep, as the noise of many waters; and yet it sounded familiar, for the accents, though stronger and more rugged, were those of my native speech. The long-forgotten world, with all its memories, all its ties, rushed back upon my thought.

"Great king, I come from thine own far-off island in the northern seas. There, Arthur of Britain is remembered still."

His countenance changed, and his mailed fingers tightened over Excalibur.

"Is it so? Bringest thou tidings from my king-

dom? Do the men of Carlyon ask for Arthur to return once more?"

And his frame, hitherto calm as a giant image of a marble knight, was stirred with human emotion. This land, then, was not like that of Ulysses, an elysium of undesiring repose.

"I cannot answer thee, O King!" I cried, while a confused mass of earthly memories struggled dimly in my brain.

But Morgue la Faye arose, and struck her wand on the area below the throne. Immediately the ground divided, and formed a deep crystal well.

"Look down, and tell what thou seest," said the sweet tones of the Queen of Faërie.

"I see a land where men run about like ants, each laden with a golden burthen, or struggling to gain the same; I see palaces built for and inhabited by fools, and squalid huts where great and wise men grovel in misery."

"Oh, my Britain! oh, my country!" groaned the king. "The time is not yet come; they look not for Arthur!"

But his immortal sister said tenderly,—

"Wait! The ages that pass by but nearer bring the joyful day, when Arthur shall come on earth again. Child of man, look into the spring once more!"

"Aye, look!" cried the king. "Tell me of my palace, the many-towered Camelot; of Tintagel, fair home of my mother Igrayne; of the plain near the sea, where my brave army fought with Mordred;

of the valley, where I lay wounded and tended by Sir Bedivere!"

"I see a castle on a cliff."

"Ah!" eagerly interposed the king of knights, "it is my ancient castle of Dovor, where Sir Gawaine's ashes lie. Do they still say the masses for his soul, and does the passing bell ring nightly over the desolate sea shore?"

"It is a shore, not desolate but thronged with human habitations. The sea is black with ships, the hum of commerce rises up to the castle-wall. Men and women, their souls and bodies alike enfeebled by luxury and thirst of gold, tread mincingly over the bones of the stalwart-limbed and noble-hearted knight."

"Alas! alas!" Arthur again began, but the Faërie lady's hand was on his lips.

My vision continued. "I behold a plain, intersected far and near with iron net-work; over it speed, thundering and howling, breathing smoke and flame, giant-steeds stranger than those which Merlin harnessed to his chariot. He chained demons within the centre of the earth; this generation has created subject-demons from the dull dead metals that lie enwombed there."

"And these mighty dwellers in Britain have forgotten their fathers. Of Arthur and his bold knights no trace or memory remains on earth," said the King, while a shadow gloomed on his brow, like a cloud sweeping over a gray mountain-top.

"Not so," I answered. "The world's truths of

mystical allegory are enduring as itself. The Round Table has crumbled into dust, and the raven hoots where stood the towers of Tintagel; but still many an old romaunt, and many a new poet's songs, keep up the name and the glory of Arthur."

The king folded his hands upon Excalibur, and leaned his forehead against the hilt. "Then I have lived," he said, and peace again stole over his majestic countenance.

Turning from the scene around me, I again sought the depths of the magic well. My vision obeyed now, not the command of Arthur, but the impulse of my own being. I saw no land, but a black heaving sea, upon which rode a single ship. Within its darkest cabin I beheld a woman sitting alone. She rocked herself to and fro in her desolation; she lifted helplessly her pale, sorrowful face.

Then I leaped up with a great cry, and from my now conscious heart burst forth the name of *Lilias*.

But immediately Morgue la Faye bound round my temples a slender circlet of gold. As it touched my brow all memory vanished, and I fell down in a swoon.

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#### CHAPTER VII.

WHEN I awoke, or seemed to awake, the presence-chamber, and all the beautiful and noble forms with which it was thronged, had disappeared. I lay in a dim

cavern that was hollowed out of a basaltic rock. Huge pillars sustained the roof; glistening stalactites peopled the place with fantastic images of natural objects, animals, and even the human form. These icy phantasms of life grinned from dim hiding-places, making the solitude horrible. It was as though a troop of spectres had suddenly been congealed into material form; each grotesque or ghastly shape still transparent as air, but fixed in an awful immobility.

As I beheld, it seemed that the most fearful vision that ever startled human eye, would be less terrible than these embodied phantoms. I strove to break the spell. I called aloud, but the echoes of my own voice rang through the cavern like the shrieks of innumerable spirits. Then I felt the thin golden thread on my brow, and remembered all that had chanced since I clung to the saving hand of Sir Galahad, within sight of the island-shore. And while I pondered, it seemed as though my nature had become like that of the other dwellers in Avillion, and I had entered on a new sphere of being. In this sphere, my memory, alive to the past of others, was utterly dead to my own. From the golden thread a balmy influence passed into my brain, stilling all those pangs which in the human world so often teach us that to suffer needs but *to remember*.

My life seemed only to have begun from the moment when my feet touched the shore of Avillion. But from that time it was a full, real life, acute to enjoy, and as acute to endure. Kneeling on the floor of the cavern, the terror that convulsed me plainly showed that I was

human still. And like the cry which weak humanity sends up to heaven, was that which, bursting from my shrinking soul, became a prayer to God.

“O Thou, who tookest me out of the deep waters, save me from this hell!”

I lifted up mine eyes, and saw standing beside one of the gigantic pillars, a form of flesh and blood. I knew it well—the dark, sombre face, in whose upper lineaments was stamped the impress of intellect and beauty, equally divine, while the lower features denoted stormy human passions—ambition, sensuality, and obstinate will—a mixture of the angel and the beast. It was Merlin the demon-born.

Still, to behold living and breathing man was bliss unutterable in this horrible place. I leaped forward and clasped the knees of the enchanter. He looked down upon me with contemptuous triumph.

“Weak child of the after ages, how thou quailest with fear at these poor shadows! With all the boasted glories of thy modern time, the magician of the elder world is greater than thou.”

At this scornful speech, I arose, trembling still, but striving to answer him boldly. “Merlin, why comest thou to mock me, after affrighting me with thy horrible phantasms? What sent thee thither?”

“The merciful tenderness of Morgue la Faye, and mine own will. I desired to see if one of the vaunted later world was bolder than the greatest magician of ancient time. I am content: now let there be peace between us.” He reached his hand; but I

paused, irresolute. "Thou fearest to clasp the hand of Merlin, the demon-born!"

He had spoken aloud the words in my heart. I dared not deny them.

"Fool! I *am* the son of a demon—of a spirit great, strong—and good, because he *was* strong. What is virtue, but that power which is the mightiest? Therefore my demon sire was as worthy of worship as any of your angels."

I shrank aghast, and instinctively made the sign which was used as a symbol in those olden times to whose simplicity I had apparently returned—the sign of the holy cross. The magician made it likewise.

"Fear not," he said: "I, too, worship God. I, with men and spirits, must needs revere the one Omnipotent Spirit, the origin of all."

As he spoke I regarded him with less of dread; for upon his dark face had dawned something which made it like unto an angel's. Such a light might have irradiated the brow of the great Hierarch of heaven, before he rebelled and fell.

"Merlin, I fear thee not, nor hate thee: God made us all—men, angels, and demons (or, as thou callest them, spirits). We are alike His children, or may become such, one day. Give me thy hand, and guide me from this dreary cave once more into the fair valley of Avillion, if indeed I am still near there."

"This is Avillion. Thou art in the island of the blest," said the magician.

I marvelled greatly. "How can it be so, when I suffer trial, and terror, and pain? Dost thou call this happiness?"

Then Merlin answered, taking up his parable, like the prophets of olden time:—

"Can the day exist without the night, or the sunshine without the shade? Does not good itself need the opposition of evil? Far higher than a dull life of perpetual selfish bliss, is that state of being which consists of temptation and triumph, struggle and victory, endurance and repose. Thus, in our life here, is intermixed just so much of evil and of suffering as will purify and lift us one stage nearer to divine perfection."

"Then all suffer, and are tempted, and must be?"

"Thou scarce knowest which thy words imply," replied Merlin; and now his speech was soft, almost heavenly, so that I loved to listen to him. "Here, as on earth, temptation comes from man, suffering from God. One is a torturing flame, the other a refining fire. In Avillion, some have to struggle against the evil within themselves: some are ordained to suffer for, with, or from their brethren."

"Which, Merlin, is thy destiny?"

"It comes upon me now!" cried the enchanter, while the heavenly influence passed from his face, and it kindled with lurid fire. He gnashed his teeth, and his glaring eyes were fixed upon a dim alcove, where stood among the stalactite images one that was likest to humanity.



Horror! while we beheld—for my gaze was rivetted too—there was a change in the icy phantom. The indistinct thing took form like a statue; the statue seemed transforming into flesh; roundness and colour came into the transparent limbs; the rigid hair stirred with life. Momently the icy shape was becoming a beautiful woman.

Merlin looked, and his face was like one struggling with the death-agony.

“Vivienne! for whom I burned in such mad passion, art thou following me still? Look!” and he clutched my hand. “Dost thou not see her, with her bare, white-gleaming limbs; her floating, perfumed tresses, in every golden thread of which she netted my soul? Dost thou not feel her young breath, that once came upon my already wrinkled brow like the breath of spring? Vivienne—my love, my beautiful: it is she—it is she!”

He drew a long gasping sigh, and stretched out his arms with a gesture of incontrollable passion. But still his feet were steadfast: he approached no nearer to the alluring phantasm, which appeared continually changing from crystal to flesh, and then back again into crystal. Merlin’s gleaming eyes drank in athirst every varying line of the lovely form.

“See!” he cried, “her brow unbends, she will smile soon; she who was so harsh, so cold! Her ripe lips part sunnily; she leans forward, her lithe form drooping like an aspen. Vivienne—Vivienne, come!”

But that instant, the cry of delirious joy became a

shriek of horror. He pressed his hands upon his eyes.

“Temptress! fiend! nay, I mingle all foul names in one, and call thee *woman*. Begone!”

He clung to the basalt pillar against which he had leaned. His face was hidden, but I saw that in the stalwart arm every muscle and nerve was quivering.

“Still there? Is not the struggle ended yet? Be thyself, Merlin! Remember the time on earth: thy mad passion that counted a life’s wisdom as nothing to one heartless woman’s love. Think of the long wanderings after her fair, cursed footsteps—cheated, befooled, mocked—think of her treachery at last. Ah, Vivienne, smilest thou still? So didst thou, luring me to enter the magic cave—so rung thy light laugh: I heard it as the spell-closed rock shut down upon me, writhing in a darkness that might have been eternal. Murderess, I defy thee! Thy tortured slave is thy victor now!”

He sprang away, and disappeared in the gloom. Immediately the woman’s form became congealed once more into its semi-transparent substance. There was a sound like the roar of many floods, and the whole scene melted away.

I found myself on the margin of a lake, surrounded with mountains. Silvery mists hung over the water, and trembled on the hill sides:—all things looked pale, shadowy, and pure. At first, I seemed to be in a deep solitude; but presently I became aware of a boat gliding over the lake. There, reclining on a golden bed, even

as that wherein he traversed the sea to the city of Sarras, I saw the form of him who alone was pure enough to behold the Sangreal—the virgin-knight, Sir Galahad.

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#### CHAPTER VIII.

As Sir Galahad neared the shore I saluted him with a reverent and joyful heart. In him seemed perpetually to abide the spirit of holiness, and that love of God which is the fountain from whence diverge wide streams of universal love. He was at once Galahad the Christian champion, before whose righteous arm fell alike the world's temptations and its opposing powers—Galahad, the pious knight who saw appear the goblet which held the Holy Greal, in the mystic covering of white samite—Galahad the youth, at once loving and pure; devoted to heaven, yet not free from human ties—witness his friends, Sir Bors and Sir Percival, and the holy self-devoted maid, Sir Percival's sister—Galahad, the tender son, who dying "kissed Sir Bors and Sir Percival, saying, 'Salute my father, Sir Launcelot, and bid him remember this unstable world,'" and then was borne upward by angels.

All these things, as I had read of them in old romaunt and history, returned vividly to my memory. I said unto him—

"O Galahad, knight beloved of God and man, is

this indeed the form whose breath parted while yet in prayer before the holy table, in the sacred city of Sarras? Did the angel-hands then bear thee, not at once to heaven, but to this happy Island of Avillion?"

He smiled serenely, and answered—

"Yea! It was God's will that I should still serve him in the flesh, and so I dwell in Avillion, among those who have journeyed thither, like Arthur, without seeing death."

"And is thine, like theirs, an existence whose bliss consists in trial conquered?" I asked, remembering Merlin and the horrible cave.

A faint shade of sadness overspread the beautiful face:—

"Not for myself I suffer, but for my brethren. I minister here as angels do on earth. They weep over human sin and sorrow; but their tears are holy, and soon dried—they know that the All-wise and All-merciful cannot but make all clear at last."

"But, save thee, the dwellers in Avillion have each this mournful doom of trial?"

"Call it not *doom*," he answered gently, "since it is God's will, and therefore must be good.—Now, of all whom thou hast seen here, whose inner struggle wouldst thou behold? Desire, and the desire will be fulfilled—it is ever so in the Happy Isle of Avillion.

"I would see Arthur," I said.

The young knight lifted me by the hands, and instantly, with the speed of a winged thought, we stood

unseen by the couch of the son of Uther Pendragon.

The King seemed to strive with troubled dreams. His huge limbs tossed restlessly, and his sleeping fingers ever sought blindly the renowned Excalibur, which lay beside him—at once his sceptre and his sword. He called oftentimes upon his good knights of the Round Table—Tristram, and Launcelot; also, Gawaine, his near kinsman, so well beloved, and by Sir Launcelot's fatal hand slain. Then, suddenly awaking, he lifted up his voice and cried—

“O valiant companions of old! O dear land of Britain! when will Arthur revisit ye once more? Why must this yearning never be allayed?—even in the happy vale of Avillion it brings perpetual pangs!”

And he smote upon his manly breast, that was long since healed of the “grievous wound,” but rent with an inward struggle, harder perhaps to bear.

Galahad came and stood beside him. I wist not whether Arthur beheld the vision; but his countenance softened into peace—even as that of a sleeper when an unseen angel passes by. He took Excalibur once more, but used it neither as a sceptre nor a sword. Lifting up the hilt, which was made in the form of a cross, he kissed it with devotion.

“O Thou, for whose blood in the Sangreal my good knights spent so many years in a patient quest, give me patience too, that I may wait until Arthur be worthy of his kingdom, and his kingdom of him! Quell this impure earthly ambition, both in memory

and in desire—let me grow meek, and pray, until the time comes when the son of Uther shall reign again in Britain.”

He kissed once more the battle-cross formed by the elfin sword, and then lay down and slept like a little child.

As Galahad passed out, the whole chamber was lightened by the holy gladness of his smile. Truly it might be seen that he had been among the angels; that in the eyes which had beheld the shining of the Sangreal dwelt the reflection of its brightness evermore.

I followed after, traversing with him the blessed isle. For it was blessed, even though it was not a region of unmixed joy, or perfect repose. Each human soul was pressing onward, and on each brow was the divine light of Hope. They drew strength even from the trials endured—as he who pushes forward in a race feels his cheek fanned by the fresh breeze into health and beauty, while the listless lingerer on perfumed banks droops wearily, howsoever the sun may shine.

“But,” I said to Sir Galahad, “when the trial is over rest comes? I would fain see this rest.”

He took me to a bower where reclined two lovers in the cool of day—

“Enter, brother!” said Galahad, “my ministry is needless here.”

So I passed, alone and still invisible, to the presence of Sir Launfal and Tryamour.

As grief grows keener from the memory of joy, so happiness is deepened by the remembrance of vanished

sorrow. I felt this when I beheld Launfal and his beloved. He talked with her of the troublous time on earth; but he spoke even of suffering with a smile.

“Dost remember, love, the Forest of Carlyon: how I lay in poverty, despondency, and pain — when the three Faërie maids came riding by, and brought me unto a region of peace and beauty, even to thee? O dear eyes, that looked upon me in my darkness and my misery, and loved me amidst all!”

And, as he lay at her feet, he drew down to his own the lovely head, and kissed the drooping eyes—radiant as those of a princess of Faërie; but tender as those of a loving woman.

Then again spoke Launfal:—

“How hard it was, after that season of bliss, to mix once more with the vileness of earth—how bitter, save for those hours when a wish brought me the dear presence of my Faërie love. Then, when for that pure smile I had to endure the false queen Guinever’s—more cursed in her love than in her hate—”

“O my faithful one! yet thou didst remember me!” And as Tryamour bent over him, her long locks, dropping immortal balm, fell in golden waves on the bosom of her knight and love.

“I remembered thee? Could I forget my life, my other soul? Yet in the dungeon and at the stake did I endure, nor implored thee to come and save me: I never asked of thee aught—not even love—yet thou gavest me all!”

She smiled upon him with her heavenly eyes, and bade him remember earth's sorrows no more.

"Nay, it is sweet to remember," answered Launfal. "Here, in this dear bower, let me think of the lonely dungeon where I lay in perpetual darkness, knowing that the first entering gleam of daylight would be a signal to guide me unto death. Let me call back the moment when dazzled, blinded, I staggered forth at last. By degrees, all grew clear: I heard the leafy rustling of the great pile formed of yet green trees—ah! cruel lengthening of torture, planned by that revengeful woman-fiend! I saw her sitting on the polluted throne, beside her deluded spouse, my dear lord King Arthur! He loved me once—even now he blenched at the sight of me, and turned away his troubled face; perchance, he could not yet believe that I had so wronged his honour. Then came the chains, the lighted torch, the approaching flame—"

"Speak no more!" shuddering said the Faërie lady—with the woman's heart.

"Yet a little; but only of thee—of thee, Tryamour!—as the steps of thy fair palfrey sounded musically along the palace terrace, and thou stoodest forth with thy immortal beauty to proclaim the honour of thy true knight. Oh! the rapture, when I felt the cool breeze wrapping my freed limbs as with a garment, and the swift steed bore me on, ever following thee, past the gleam of the now harmless pyre, past the shoutings of the multitude, far, far over forest, mountain, and sea, into the happy vale of Avillion."



He looked up ; first heavenwards, and then into that earthly heaven, the eyes of her he loved. As I beheld him, it seemed that his face, sublimed by past suffering, was more beautiful even than hers, which bore the cloudless aspect of perpetual bliss. I saw how it was that, in some things, *a man* is greater than an angel.

As these two sat together, leaning cheek to cheek in the silence of perfect love, the birds in the linden-trees over-head broke forth into singing ; and lo ! amidst the marvels of the Happy Isle, I distinguished one more—that their very song was speech. Thus it ran :—

“ But for the rain, the green earth would wither ; without the evening gloom, man could not behold the stars. So, storm bringeth freshness ; night, dawn ; trial, peace ; and death, immortality ! ”

I fell on my face, praying—nay, almost weeping, as one sometimes does in a heart-poured prayer such as was mine. When it ended, I arose ; but the marriage-bower, and those happy ones who abode therein, I saw no more.

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#### CHAPTER VIII.

I STOOD once more beside the lake amidst the hills. It was still veiled in that perpetual mist ; and the solitary marge was dimly illumined by a light like that of a gray June midnight, when the pale half-moon has

just set. There was no sound, not even of a stirring leaf; for the hills sloped down to the water-side, bare and treeless; lake, mountain, and sky—sky, lake, and mountain—reflected each other in ghost-like silence and repose.

At length, through the mist, I heard a sound of many footsteps. They came nearer; and I distinguished the form of Merlin, leading a mounted band of the dwellers in Avillion. Suddenly he paused, and the loud trumpet-tone of his voice rang over the still shore:—

“Who will go with me across the Lake of Shadows?”

There stepped forward the giant figure of King Arthur—Morgue la Faye following. Behind them Sir Galahad stood, meek, yet fearless; and these three alone answered Merlin’s summons. But the King paused, and said,—

“How shall we cross the awful lake? Galahad, thou only among us who has known death, aid us now.”

The young knight advanced to the margin, and stretched his arms out over the water that lay before him, solemn, soundless, unrippled by a single wave. Then I saw glide towards him the boat in which he had formerly reclined, with its purple sails shadowing the golden bed. It came on, impelled invisibly; for there was no man therein.

“Enter!” said Galahad, in his angel-voice; and immediately the vessel rocked beneath the great bulk of

the two mightiest of Britain's ancient sons, Arthur and Merlin. "Enter thou, too, my brother," said they to me.

So I entered tremblingly, yet eagerly, after Morgue la Faye. Then Merlin uttered a spell, and the boat darted forward from the strand without either wind or tide.

Far out into the lake we sailed. The silvery vapours shut out from my vision alike shore and sky. I cast my eyes downwards; and lo! it seemed that, like a bird of the air sweeping over a city of earth, the boat glided over a new world lying beneath the waters. In its mysterious depths, I saw palaces, towers, tombs, outlined dimly through a gigantic shroud of mist, like that which hung above the surface. At times, stirring amidst this shroud, I distinguished denser vapours, which scarce bore airy form, but resembled the *cirri* that float in a summer evening sky.

Merlin arose. As the masses of his black robe fell heavily around him, he might have been likened to a thunder-cloud lifting itself slowly from the horizon. He wore no magic symbols; he held no books of power. In the strength of his soul alone lay the necromancer's might.

"Ye who desired to visit the Lake of Shadows—say, who among you seeks to call up the ghastly habitants of the City of the Dead?"

King Arthur spoke first:—

"I yearn for tidings of my kingdom on the earth. Therefore I would fain summon those who lie buried in

Britain, and whose spirits may still hover round the spot where their bones repose. Which among them, deemest thou, is most able to answer my summons?"

"Love only has power over death," replied the enchanter. "Call one of those who were dearest to thee on earth."

"They were few indeed!" And a grim, almost scornful smile swept over Arthur's face. "Ambition was all to me. I loved my royal kingdom more than any of its subject dwellers—save, perhaps, Guinever and Gawaine."

"Choose between them!" said Merlin's stern voice.

The monarch paused, irresolute.

"Gawaine, thou wert a valiant knight; indeed I loved thee, my sister's son! But Guinever sat with me on that dear-prized throne. I summon her, not as the wife of Arthur, but the Queen of Britain."

Morgue la Faye's hand dropped from her brother's, and Merlin's dark brow was knitted in wrath. Nevertheless he leaned over the vessel's side, dipped his fingers in the lake, and uttered the spell:—

"Soul of Guinever Queen of Britain, arise!"

Slowly lifting itself out of the deep appeared one of the cloud-like vapours. Gradually it became a human form, wearing a nun's garb. Then I remembered the story of the death of her whose spirit parted ere Sir Launcelot came to Almesbury, over whom "*he wept not greatly, but sighed.*" Perchance that one long tear-

less sigh followed the frail Guinever's fleeting soul even to its resting-place; for in the wail that arose from the waters, I heard evermore the words—

“Launcelot! Launcelot!”

“Peace, complaining spirit! False queen, false wife, false woman, answer thy lord!” cried the enchanter.

Arthur spoke—stern, cold, passionless. He thought neither of pity, anger, nor revenge—only of his Britain. But to all his questions came from the suffering soul no word, save the cry of “Mercy, mercy! I repent! Let me rest!” And ever and anon, in mournful plainings, was repeated the wail, “Launcelot! Launcelot!”

The king sat down wrathful and silent; and the phantom faded into a wreath of mist that seemed continually to hover round the vessel.

Then Sir Galahad arose, and stood before Arthur and Merlin, meek reproach, mingled with sorrow, clouding his eyes.

“Oh, men!” he said: “sinful yourselves, yet so harsh to judge the sinning—is there no pity in God's dear heaven for such as these? The convent-cell at Almesbury yet bears record of the tears, the sackcloth, the bloody scourge—sad portion of her who was once a queen! The aisles of Glastonbury yet ring with those funeral orisons wrung from the penitent despair of the knighted monk!”

And turning from where Arthur and Merlin sat together—both shrinking into silence before his words

—Galahad dipped his hands in the lake, writing in the stirless waters the sign of the holy cross.

“ Oh, dear father, my lord Sir Launcelot, whose sins may God pardon! no voice but mine shall summon thee here. Let me look on thy face once more!”

There was a pause; and then rising from the misty depth, I saw the mailed image of a knight. It was Guinever’s lover—faithful in sin, but yet most faithful—the bravest of the champions of the Round Table—Sir Launcelot du Lac. Beneath the shadowy helmet were the features—still, and ashen gray—as they might have appeared to his brother monks who gazed down weepingly into the deep grave at Joyous Garde.

He spoke not, and none spoke with him. Only his son Galahad, with clasped hands, knelt and prayed.

Even while the spirit lingered, there came and hovered over his helm a cloud-like shadow; and through the silence was heard that continual wail—“ Launcelot, Launcelot!” But it won no answer, either in word or look, from the pale spectre of Guinever’s knight.

The phantoms both grew dimmer; and then I was aware of another sight coming near the vessel. It seemed an open boat; and therein, resting on a bed, was a woman dressed in fair array; and “ *she lay as though she had smiled.*” By this, and by the writing in her hand, I knew the vision was she who had died for love of Sir Launcelot—Elaine, the fair maid of Astolat. I looked on the beautiful dead image, and thought of the time when the waters of Thames had

floated up to the feet of Sir Launcelot this poor broken lily, that asked no guerdon for love faithful even unto death, but burial from his hand. And when I remembered this, my heart melted with pity, and I wept.

"Dost thou weep for me?" said a voice, sweet in its sadness, like a vesper-bell heard over the sea at night. I felt it came from the pale lips that looked "*as if they smiled.*" "Weepest thou for me, because I died? Nay: for love's bliss was greater than death's pain."

"How so—when the love proved vain?" I asked.

She did not answer my words; but went on murmuring softly, as one does in musing aloud:—

"Dear my lord Sir Launcelot! was it sin or shame that I should love thee, who came and stood before me like an angel in a dream? I never thought tenderly of living man, save thee. Thou wert the sun that unfolded my life's flower: when the sun set, it faded, and I died."

The voice was thrilled with a meek sorrow that roused my pity into wrath.

"Surely it was evil in the sun to scorch the poor flower," I cried, remembering how the concealed knight took and wore in the fray the token of Elaine la Blanche; and how, when she swooned at his wound, he, saying no word of any former love, prayed her brother, Sir Lavaine, to bring her to him, and took her in his arms and kissed her. Then I thought of all the days of fondest tendance which to the knight brought renewed life, to the fair maid death. And lastly, of the cruel

scorn which, knowing her pure love, instead of requital offered pitiful gold. And my swelling heart told me that Sir Launcelot had done a grievous wrong.

But again the voice seemed to answer my thoughts, though it spoke not to me, but dreamily and vague:—

“ Was it, then, so sorrowful to die for thee, my Launcelot? or did my death lay aught to thy charge? Nay: it was no sin of thine. I worshipped thee, as one should only worship Heaven; Heaven punished me—then pityingly took me home: I am content!”

Again my tears fell to hear that low, tender voice; and I marvelled in my heart whether on earth it had been ever thus uncomplaining. The spirit answered once more:—

“ What was I, that I should murmur against thee, O my lord Sir Launcelot? Only once—when I lay in my tears, and darkness, and despair—I heard the blithe sound of thy trumpets, and saw thee going forth again into the fair world; while I—forgotten, forsaken—was to thee less than the grass under thy footsteps. Oh, forgive me, my lord and love, for that one cry of reproach against thee! I *would* have been—aye, ten thousand times—that trodden grass, if for a moment it gave freshness to thy feet!”

I looked on the calm features, where no movement of the lips gave token of the voice which spake. But the deep peace of the smile that sat on the dead face was an echo of the words which the spirit uttered. And when I thought of the pure soul which had departed in the tower of Astolat—praying and confessing



meekly unto God, and remembering with tender and forgiving love Sir Launcelot—I said in my heart that unto such, against whom earth's hopes are closed, does the kingdom of heaven open.

While I watched this vision, Arthur, Merlin, and Sir Galahad sat at the vessel's prow, each absorbed in thought; little to them was maiden's love or maiden's woe. But Morgue la Faye came near with her woman's soul shining tearfully in her majestic eyes, and cried—

“ Tell me—thou pure and meek spirit, whom I have summoned from thy rest—does the remembered love of earth wound thee even in Paradise ? ”

Elaine la Blanche answered:—

“ I love still, but I suffer no more : God looked on me in mercy, and drew wholly unto Himself that love which in life was divided. I am happy—yet I forget thee not : I never could forget thee, my lord Sir Launcelot ! ”

While the voice yet spoke, there stood beside the bed another spirit—also in woman's form. Before its glory the mists dispersed, and light broke forth upon the waters. Soon another voice was heard, sweet as that which had murmured its patient sorrow ; but clear and joyous as the angels' harping before the throne.

“ Galahad, dear brother of my soul, say unto my brother in the flesh, Sir Percival—and to that true knight Sir Bors—that far exceeding the holy city of Sarras, to which we four journeyed together, is the

Eternal city, New Jerusalem. Say, I rejoice that I died, a willing sacrifice, for the glory of God."

Galahad lifted his brow, radiant with exceeding joy.

"Maiden—through life pure and heaven-devoted, as was the virgin-mother of Nazareth—say, where does thy soul abide?"

"In Paradise; ministering there as many of God's servants do on earth, and as thou dost in Avillion. Therefore my spirit, inter-penetrated and made strong by its love of God—which in life was entire and undivided—is commanded to succour this soul, once tortured by earthly love. Sister, come!"

Over the bier she bent, lifting by the hand the pale form, even like Him who lifted the dead, and said, "Arise."

Elaine arose. To the opening eyes came a brightness, less of earth than heaven; to the lips came a voice—no mournful complainings, but melodious hallelujahs. And so, linked hand-in-hand, the sister-souls passed from sight, not sinking like the rest into the dim city of the dead, but soaring upwards unto the mount of God.

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#### CHAPTER IX.

As one who falls, flooded and dazzled by a sunshine cloud—or as Paul fell, blinded by the heavenly vision near Damascus—so sank I. Human eye and ear could not endure the glorious radiance, the angelic

melody. Beneath them, my brain and sense seemed numbed—or rather exhaled into delicious death.

From this trance I awoke, feeling on my brow the light touch of a woman's hand. It brought strange, undefined remembrances. Wistfully I looked up.

I lay in the midst of the great hall, once filled with many knights and ladies. It now held only the fair presence of Queen Morgue la Faye. But she stood beside me less as a queen than a woman. Her gorgeous robes were thrown aside, and in her white garments she seemed a simple earthly maid, even resembling — I strove to remember what or who she resembled; but my thoughts fled away, like winged birds, ever fluttering on before, yet impossible to seize. Amidst them I heard continually the murmuring of the little fount which had sprung up at Morgue la Faye's bidding from the cloven marble floor. It seemed singing to me an olden song of some long-past existence; and yet, when I drew nearer, its waters were as smooth and as opaque as the marble which encircled them. But still, rising from their depths, came that mystic murmur, as it were a voice from the inner earth.

I leaned eagerly over the well, and my greedy ear drank in its musical whispers. Morgue la Faye said to me—

“Child of man, what dost thou hear?”

“I hear a sound, like the evening wind in the full-leaved linden-trees that grew—where was it they grew? Or like that Eolian harp we put between the ivied window, and listened—*who* listened, and *when*?

Alas! alas! the thoughts slip from me; I cannot grasp them!"

"Bend down thy head again over the water."

"I feel—I feel a perfume; it comes from a violet-bank, the bank where—but no, all is gone. Again, it is like a rose-garden; I am walking there in sunshine and gladness; and now it changes to a sweet clematis-breath—wafted through that still autumn night, with the stars shining coldly overhead, and the waning crescent glimmering through the trees. Ah me! ah me! it is fled from me! No more! no more!" And uttering these mournful words, the perpetual dirge of life, I fell down weeping beside the mysterious spring.

Morgue la Faye stood on the other brink; for the well had grown wider and broader, and even now was swelling out into an infant stream. She stood, her falling hands meek-folded, her head half bent, watching me. A gleam of womanly pity softened the steel-like brightness of her eyes.

Perceiving it, I cried imploringly,—

"O Queen of Avillion, I am not of thy nature, but only mortal man! Why dost thou try me thus?"

"Because, as thou sayest, thou art not of our nature," she answered softly. "Thou canst not stay in our happy isle; but I have no power, nor yet desire, to cast thee thence. Thou must depart of thine own will."

"Depart!" I echoed sorrowfully; for now that the spell had ceased, I felt no more the vague memories

and wild longings which it had awakened. I thought with fear of quitting the beautiful island for some unknown region, perhaps of horror and woe.

"Poor mortal!" Morgue la Faye continued. "Art thou then so loath to depart? Do the sounds and sights of former times, which I have raised up before thee, fail to win thee back to earth?"

"I know not of what thou speakest," I answered, trembling. "True, I had a vision; but it is gone now. I would fain stay in Avillion."

"It cannot be," said the firm but still gentle voice of King Arthur's sister, as she crossed the spring, its waters sinking not beneath her airy footsteps. Then she bade me kneel, and took from my head the slender thread of gold which continually encircled it.

Instantly my brain reeled beneath the thronging memories with which it teemed. All came back to me—my land, my home, my Liliās—each thought piercing my soul like arrows tipped with that bitterest poison, the remembrance of eternally-lost joy.

I dashed myself on the ground at the feet of Morgue la Faye:—

"Cruel queen, why didst thou take from me that blessed spell of Oblivion? Why torture me with these memories of earth? O Liliās my wife! my love! my beautiful! would to Heaven that I might see thy face once more!"

Morgue la Faye lifted me from the earth, where I grovelled in mad despair, and led me to the brink of the magic well.

“ Now, poor child of mortality, cast thine eyes down once more.”

I did so. Oh marvel! As the clouds of oblivion had passed from my soul, so passed the dusky shadow from beneath the water, which became crystal clear. While I gazed, there grew defined from out its depths the image of a scene—an earth-landscape—one that I knew—oh how well! Blue and dim rose the mountains—those giant spectres of my childhood, which, night after night, enclosed the descending sun in their craggy, ghostly arms; beneath them lay the valley, and the broad river, and the woody slope, where stood—a Home.

We had chosen it as our home, our wedded home, when—the melancholy voyage ended—Lilias and I should return to our own land and our own people. There it stood, near the spot where we had both dwelt from childhood—a house reverend and beautiful with years. Over its brown walls climbed the ivy, mingling with the dear clematis, cherished of old; its painted gothic windows transmitted every sunbeam in rainbow-tinted glory; and from its protecting eaves the brooding swallows merrily flew—their cheerful homes without being meet emblems of that most blessed one within.

A moment, and the scene changed to the interior. I saw the quaint labyrinthine chambers, whose gloom was made beautiful by the presence of youth and happiness. Pictures shone from the dark-panelled walls; in a recess, the ivory-keyed instrument smiled over

the soul of music shut up within it ; above the green, branch-adorned hearth, fresh-gathered flowers bent to their own fair images in the mirror.

And near them, pure and lovely as they, was my own life's flower, whom I had chosen to adorn and bless my home—my wife Liliās !

She sat droopingly, her cheek resting against the crimson chair—the same where mine had rested in many an hour of mental and bodily suffering. The remembrance seemed to strike her then ; for suddenly she lifted her face, wherein was love so intense that it almost became agony, and cried—aye, *I heard the very tone—*

“ Wilfred, beloved, come ! ”

I would have plunged into hell itself to answer that call ! Hearing it, I sprang madly into the waters, there to seek the vision and the voice.

In a moment, Avillion and its dwellers had vanished from me for ever.

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#### CHAPTER X.

AWAKING, I found myself, not in the happy home—not in the dear arms of my Liliās—but lying in the depth of a thick wood, which, though in all things resembling earth, was yet unknown to me.

I had gained a strange new land—but different from both those I had mysteriously traversed ; it was neither Elysium nor Avillion. It was a human world. I trod

it with the body of a living man—a man of modern time. I repeated to myself the name I bore in my father's house, Wilfred Mayer. Another name, not less familiar, I murmured, mingled with many tears; the name of my long-parted wife—my dear Liliās. Every home-recollection came back to me, as to one who after a season of madness is restored to health and reason. The intervening time was dim; I could scarce tell whether it were vision or reality. But all seemed ended now. I felt a real man, dwelling on a real earth.

I touched the moss whereon I lay—the same green carpet of which Liliās and I had often heaped fairy-cushions in her childish days; when I, a sickly youth, was glad to make myself a child for and with her. Thinking of this, I laid my cheek on the soft moss, kissed it, and wept.

Suddenly I heard a footstep passing by. It was a stranger—human like myself. The face was such a one as in this nineteenth century may be seen sometimes—nay, often—in street, or mart, or social dwelling; not radiant in superhuman beauty, nor yet devoid of an inward spiritual charm; the face neither of a god nor an angel, but of *a good man*. The moment I saw it, I acknowledged this; stretched out my hand to him, and called him “brother.”

“You say right,” he answered, smiling. “We are all brothers here, and though I cannot say I know your face, yet there is something in it which seems familiar to me. Therefore, welcome, brother!”

“Welcome to where? for indeed I know not.”



"To a quiet spot on God's earth, which its inhabitants try to make as near as they can to Paradise. We call it Eden-land, or the Happy Isle."

"Another Happy Isle!" I cried, and again became bewildered. "Oh, friend! I have dreamed such wild dreams, if indeed they be dreams. Help me to clear my poor wandering brain. I desire nought but quiet, and home, and Liliass."

"Liliass? I knew the name once; it was a sorrowful name to me, but its memory is softened here. Come, stranger and brother, you shall speak no more, think no more, until you have rested and grown calm. Follow me to my home."

He took my hand and guided me through the wood. I noticed more closely his face, his bearing, even his garments. The latter were simple and manly; such as one in our century and our English clime might wear, consulting ease and grace rather than fantastic fashion. We entered his dwelling, which was characteristic as his dress—entered by an unlatched door. Then he began to fulfil the gentle precept which I saw written over his hearth. "*Feed the hungry, and clothe the naked.*"

In a brief time I stood beside him, already feeling like a denizen of this new home and new world. Then we sat down together by that hospitable hearth, and he said to me—

"My brother—or rather my son, for you are a youth compared with these white hairs—will you now tell me by what name I shall call you?"

"Its sound will bring back mournful remembrances," said I. "It is mine, and my father's also,—Wilfred Mayer."

The stranger clasped my two hands in his, and then looked at me eagerly, fondly, parting back my hair as though I had been a little child. "I could weep now," he said, "save that in this happy place are no tears shed, not even for earth's memories. I rejoice, and thank Heaven, that I look in the face of my sister's son."

"You are then—"

"Ay, say the name, since it is not forgotten on earth," and he smiled with a calm pleasure; "the name I bore when we were all little children together—*Cyril*."

"I learned it when I was a child too," cried I, clasping his hand once more. "Well I remember how on many a stormy winter's night my mother would stand by my little bed, pale and grave, and teach me in my simple prayers to say, 'God preserve Uncle Cyril far over the seas.'"

"Did she so?—my dear Hester—my true sister!" murmured the old man with a tremulous lip. "Go on, tell me more."

"He was always a mystery to me, this Uncle Cyril, whom I had never seen, and of whom no one spoke without looking sorrowful. Once, too, when there came to us, with her babe in her arms, the mother of *Lilias*—"

"You mistake," cried Cyril. "The mother of *Lilias*

died at her birth. Nay, but I forget time's passing. Perhaps there was a second Lilius? Go on, Wilfred."

"I remember that day well: how I, a blithe school-boy, was touched by her sweet, quiet face, and hearing she had come from abroad, asked her, as I did all strangers, if she brought news of Uncle Cyril; how she looked very mournful, and my mother took me away, telling me not to speak to her of Uncle Cyril more."

Cyril drooped his head lower on his hands, only saying softly, "Go on, my sister's child, go on."

"I remember also, though faintly, for I was still very young, how there used to come letters from abroad, over which my mother looked grave, nay, wept sometimes, and I knew they were from Uncle Cyril. Over the last she did not weep but smiled, took me on her knee, and told me that Uncle Cyril was coming home. Week after week passed, but he came not. My father sometimes hinted of ships that set sail for home, and vanished strangely on the wide deep, never reaching land. And day by day my mother's face grew sadder, and she started at every sound. When I asked her what had become of Uncle Cyril's ship, she would shudder and say that God alone knew—no living man could tell."

I paused, but he motioned me to continue.

"Month after month went by, and a strange awe came over me. All day I pondered about the missing

vessel, whose fate no man knew. Sometimes at night I dreamed about it; I saw it on fire,—or becalmed until all the crew perished by slow famine or maddening thirst,—or striking on a rock, and sinking in a moment, as though some great demon from the world below had sucked it in with all its living freight. Every wild sea-tale that I had read—every wilder fancy that boyhood's dreamy brain could conceive—were gathered up to give form and shape to the story. Yet still it was there—a nameless horror—a mystery sealed, until the great day when the sea should give up her dead.”

“Amen!” said my companion, solemnly. “But tell me still of that dear home.”

“There, week by week, hope grew fainter—faded—died. At last my mother told me, sadly, but without weeping, to leave out one name in my childish prayers—for that Uncle Cyril was with God, and needed them no more. But the awe and expectation would not pass away; and many a night I started up in my little bed, dreaming that he was come.”

I ceased, and a deep silence fell upon us both, as we sat by the red embers of the sinking fire—for the climate had changed in this new world, and I felt no longer the glow of perpetual summer, but the pleasant chill of autumn. I thought of the region, and of my companion, with a curiosity born scarce of fear but wonder. Had Cyril indeed passed through the awful gate, and did I stand in the Land of the Dead, with one of its unearthly inhabitants? He might have read my thoughts;

for my hand was caressed once more by his own hand of flesh and blood, as he said—

“My kinsman, Wilfred Mayer,—know that God’s power and mysteries, even on earth, are greater than men dream of. Listen to the tale of one who, though he has seen strange things, and been led through strange paths, yet looks, like thee, to the same ending of the journey—death’s calm sleep, and the waking unto an eternal morrow.”

He lifted his eyes to heaven: I drew near and listened to his words.

“There was a boy once, born with every passion in his nature so vehement, that a feather’s touch might turn him either to good or evil. It is so sometimes: Gabriel and Lucifer were both archangels, and the boldest of all the apostles was he who stood consenting unto the death of Stephen. We cannot fathom these mysteries.

“Well! the boy of whom I speak had two good angels ever at his side—his twin sister Hester, and one who was of distant kindred, though she had grown up with them, eating the same bread, and drinking of the same cup. Of these two the youth loved one dearly, as a brother should; the other—God alone knoweth how he loved *her*! In this love were mingled esteem, reverence, tenderness, passion. Every one of his heart’s fibres clung around her, day by day. And because they had so twined—slowly, imperceptibly, like household links—she never felt or saw them; but when dearer bonds came, she untwined these, smil-

ingly, unconsciously—slipped from them; they fell—and the boy's heart broke!

“I speak wildly: it did not break; but its softness became iron—its full, rich tide was turned to gall. She lived to weep a sister's tears—mark you, *only a sister's!*—over an outcast and a prodigal. She never knew the truth; if she had—why even then it would have been the same. She had done no wrong—she never loved him.

“He became a wanderer over the wide world. The face of God, which he had mocked in the glare of cities, he learned to see revealed in the terrible loneliness of the desert—in the wonders of the mighty deep. Still he wandered on—God's mercy following him. Who could hide from the presence of the Eternal? In the grand mountain solitudes It came, bringing awful peace—It soothed him in the deep river-flow—It smiled upon him in the green, sunny savannah. So, through the wide arms of Nature—the Nature which He had made—God drew unto himself this erring soul; and it grew pure and calm.

“After many years, the man yearned to see the home whence the boy had fled with curses. He embarked for England—his heart's desire flying swifter than the vessel; but an unseen hand prevented both. Nor ship nor crew were ever heard of more.”

“Tell me, O strange relater of this marvellous tale, whither sped the fated ship—or how?”

His voice changed, and his countenance likewise.

He spoke now like one, who forgetting himself, had become a teacher among his brethren.

"I said before, in this world, concerning which proud man thinks he knows all, there are many mysteries of which he knows nothing. Who has ever found a path through the region of eternal ice? Whose daring bark has sailed over the mighty Antarctic Sea?"

"It is true! It is true! But my sense is bewildered; explain the mystery further."

He went on:—

"Men traverse the seas, year after year, safely; but then comes a tale of some ship which has vanished mysteriously from the face of the deep—how, or by what means, none can ever tell. In the thronged ocean-pathway no floating wreck, no glimpse of a flaming vessel, gives token how she perished: men shudder, marvel,—and forget, until they hear a like tale."

"It is even so!" I sighed.

"Now, listen! *The vessels perish not*: He to whom belong land and sea, hides them in the hollow of His hand, and brings them safe to a haven in the midst of the deep—an island-garden—the Eden whence Adam was driven. It is here!"

I started in trembling wonder:—

"This, then, is Paradise?"

"Not Paradise, such as when man needed continually the visible presence of angels; but an Eden suited for earth's late-born children—a land where men of this modern time may live in peace, and worship God."

He rose up, for while we talked night had fallen :—

“Now, my son—are you not even as my son?—go !  
Rest and sleep. To-morrow I will show the wonders of  
this land.”

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#### CHAPTER XI.

I LAID me down, and slept the deep sleep of healthful weariness. At dawn I awoke ;—there was, then, night and day, sunrise and sunset, in this Eden-land ? The golden darts fell on my eyelids, and slumber passed away. My mind was clear ; I remembered all the past, even its sufferings ; but suffering itself was calm. I waited meekly for the strange mysteries of my fate to work themselves out : they were a mingled and knotted web ; but the beam was held by a Hand Divine.

I lay on my bed, my once-tortured heart beating peacefully beneath my folded hands. Ere the dawn-streaks had faded from the sky, Cyril stood beside me.

“My son, arise ! He who loves not the early morning loves not the memory of his youth.”

I arose, and clad myself in the simple garments of this land. As I felt my limbs free to bound, and the sweet morning air played round my bare throat, and tossed my long wavy hair, it seemed to me that even these little things influence man’s character, and that he in whose soul dwells the love of the beautiful, will ever follow nature’s most perfect Art, in order that



in himself he may show, as far as he can, the image of that grace which he delights to behold in others.

We quitted Cyril's dwelling, and went out towards the forest.

"Whither do you lead me, my kind guide?" I said.

He answered, "To worship, with morning freshness, the God of the morning."

He walked along a little further, quite silent, and then stood still. We were in a narrow valley, lying east and west, enclosed on two sides by the gray mountains and purple woods, and between them, from out the sea which bounded the valley eastward, burst the sunrise. Oh! it was glorious!

"Beautiful! how beautiful is morning!" murmured Cyril. And turning round, he said, "It ever seems to me, dear kinsman, as though the earth at dawn recovers its Eden-freshness; or that when night, the shadow of God's protecting hand laid over it, is withdrawn, there comes a passing vision of the glory departing."

"It is so," I answered. "Nay, it seems as though He who called Himself the 'bright and morning star,' and 'the Sun of Righteousness arising,' had especially hallowed the dawn of day."

"And meant that man should hallow it too. Therefore, come and see how we hail the morning."

I followed him far in the forest to a great temple. Its strong tree-pillars had never been reared; they had risen of themselves through the mystic inward principle of life, which no human power can give to

the meanest blade of grass. Its walls were formed of interlacing verdure, its pavement tessellated with flowers. Through its leafy arches rang the voices of innumerable choristers, invisible cherubs of the air, hymning continually. And its roof was the blue infinite ether, through which the moon climbed, and the stars wandered in their courses. Upwards rose the prayers and praises of the worshippers; there was not one human veil between them and heaven.

I heard from afar the loud song; I saw the multitude like that "which no man can number;" every age, sex, and rank, uniting in the same solemn strain. There, for the first time *and the last*, I beheld a church on earth praising God with one voice.

"Is it the Sabbath?" I whispered.

"Every day is a Sabbath here."

"And the priest? I see none."

"Every man is a priest—a priest in his own household. Yet there are degrees of honour, men called on to be teachers among the flock; but none says to his brother, 'Stand aside, I am holier than thou;' none cries arrogantly, '*My* truth is the only truth, and thine a lie.' For we know that each flower may drink in the same sun, yet assume a different hue, and give forth a different perfume, according to its nature and clime. Forms are nothing: it is the spirit within which is the life."

"Still," I said, "there can be but one sun and one dew to give that life."

"Yes," he answered, "and if the flower grow strong and shed its odours, no matter what flower it be, doubt

not but the true life is there. How else could the fruits exist? Yet these are mysteries amidst which the wisest among us can but grope blindly; only we know that one day all will be made plain."

"Amen!" said I, as the multitude arose from their knees, and their morning worship done, went about that which is also a kind of worship—daily toil for themselves and their dear households.

"But," said I unto Cyril, "I see here labour and endurance; Eden-land is then no place of continual rest."

"Rest!" cried Cyril, while his brow shone with a prophet-like radiance. "Does the Omnipotent rest, when He sends through the wide universe His love, which is Himself? Do the angels rest when they traverse infinite space to do his bidding? And think you that we shall rest when we become, like them, ministering spirits? No; in earth or heaven there is not, there ought not to be, any perpetual rest."

As he ceased, we came to a little hill which overlooked a wide champaign. There I saw the tokens of all necessary toil: the labourer delved the field, the woodman cleared the forest, the manufacturer and mechanic plied their handiwork, for ornament as well as use. I pondered awhile, and then said to my guide—

"Another mystery comes to me. In this land there are both rich and poor?"

"There are, because Eden-land is a reflex of the world—our modern world. Therein, while earth lasts,

rich and poor *must* 'meet together.' Equality is but a fantastic dream. Until men's natures are made all similar, their outward lives and circumstances will vary. The oak and the bramble may spring from the same soil, but one crawls on the earth while the other tops the forest. Yet the same life-principle germinates in both."

We stood where we could see at once town and hamlet, cottage and lordly dwelling, the blue sky bending over all. And I began to moralize and think how Heaven had made every created thing for good. I wondered if the world of human hearts were pure and peaceful as the outer world which I beheld. So, as we sat by the way-side, I spoke my thoughts to Cyril.

He smiled, and said my desire should be presently fulfilled. We reclined under a woodbine-hedge; I lay pulling garlands of white convolvulus, and thinking how strange it was to see again all the flowers I loved—the flowers of earth, but far more beautiful. There came, rising and falling, the song of the reapers in the field, and against the horizon twined and curled in fairy wreaths, the smoke from the distant furnace where the metal-workers plied their trade. There was poetry and happiness even in labour and poverty.

As I mused there came past one of the gleaners; a girl—a very Ruth—laden with golden-eared wheat, She went along singing, tossing the wavy sheaf over her shoulder, and leading by the other hand an old man who crept feebly along.

While he tottered on, the echoes of his cumbrous staff kept time to the girl's light-hearted warble; and as they passed us by and wound down the hilly road, it seemed to me like the seraphs, Hope and Cheerfulness, making music to the sound of Poverty's heavy tread. And like a sweet poem accompanying the strain came Cyril's half-musing speech:—

“ I do not believe that the All-merciful and Almighty ever created or permitted evil. That which we call so, can be only a mysteriously-disguised form of good. If want and sorrow were not, where then would be charity? If none suffered, who could show love, pity, and sympathy? If help were never needed, who could know the joy of gratitude? O man, canting of a sinful and miserable world! how darest thou to speak thus of that earth on which its Maker looked, ‘and behold it was very good’?”

He sat, forgetting me and all else, in a reverie deep and calm. I looked on the face, where every mark of earthly pain was obliterated, and I could have knelt before him.

From our wayside-nook I marked many a passer-by. The poor man carolled gaily on foot, the rich man rolled in his gay equipage, serene yet thoughtful; for riches have many cares, and the great are Heaven's stewards upon earth. Then came a various multitude, their faces not disguised with false smiles; but each brow was clear as the day, each man's heart being written on his countenance. Here was the region where none dreaded Truth.

Yet there were as many varying shades of character as in the land from whence I had drawn my being. The wise man raised his thoughtful brow to heaven—that heaven which seemed nearer to him than earth. Yet he was not lifted up by pride, so as to scorn his brethren; but walked among them, humble as the most unlearned of them all. The unlettered man, without mocking or envying the gifts to which he could not aspire, moved on his lowly way, his diligence and benevolence strewing earth with flowers, though they could not make him wings to soar upward to the stars.

Women passed by, clad not in costly garments, but with that robe of meekness which is above all price. Wearing it, they appeared perpetually fair; for a beautiful soul makes a beautiful face, and she who is ever-loving, will surely be loved evermore. In Eden-land were no neglected daughters, estranged sisters, or forsaken wives; for each had learned that to love is to win love, and that while man's glory is in a wise and tender sway, woman's strength is often in her weakness; that from her cradle to her grave, no woman was ever truly happy, unless she could look up to man in some relation of life—either father, brother, husband, or friend, and say, humbly and lovingly, “I will obey thee, for thou art greater than I.”

These scenes I beheld—these thoughts I pondered over; then I returned with Cyril to the little cottage in the forest, and the sun set upon my first day in Eden-land.

## CHAPTER XII.

It was again dawn in the forest-temple ; the worshippers were departing, each his several way, to his home or to his merchandize. I noticed the various groups, and my mind was bewildered with many conjectures. Did there reign here, as in the olden world, the two mighty ones, Love and Death? How, then, could perfect happiness exist?

I uttered my thoughts aloud, but Cyril smiled serenely at my doubts. He answered them not, save by the meek and trusting speech—

“ All that is, is good ; we learn this lesson in Edenland.” And then he pointed to a train which had separated itself from the rest, and passed into a green alley of linden-trees.

“ Let us follow them ! ”

We did so. There was in the midst an old man, gentle and saint-like in mien, to whom they all listened earnestly. He taught, not of religion, but of that which is next to it in holiness—Love. He spoke of all tender affection—of kindred, of friendship, and lastly of that mysterious bond between man and woman which heaven ordained to complete the being and fulfil the happiness of either—true and faithful wedded love.

Love, then, was known here. I marvelled, remembering all its miseries on earth : changed love—hopeless love—lost love. But as these doubts arose, they faded before the words of him who spake, answering as it were to my inward thought.

“Love that changes is not love—it is a dream, a delusion, an idol worshipped with the senses, not the heart. Pure love is rarely hopeless, save through wrong done each to the other, or evil coming from the world outside. And lost love—who shall call that *lost* which heaven takes? Therefore in this our happy dwelling, where there is no sin, there can be no sorrow; and love, given to be man’s chief joy, and out of which his own erring will alone has created misery, is here no longer a curse but a blessing.”

And as I looked around, on the faces of young and old there came a tender light, a blushing joy, which echoed his words in smiles. I thought of the world wherein I had once dwelt, and sighed to remember how man there made a hell of what should have been a heaven.

Again the pastor spoke of the sacredness of love; how that between two young hearts that leaned each to each like meeting flowers, no blast of human fate should be suffered to come. Then he spoke of two who loved one another—but worldly fortune stood between, and Poverty’s iron arms tore them asunder.

“Shall this be, O my brothers?” he cried. “Come, ye childless ones! who have none to inherit your countless stores, give unto these, and babes’ voices may yet rise up in prayer for you. Ye lonely ones—in whose heart love was a fresh fountain, until God sent the Angel of Death to seal the waters on earth, that they might spring forth purer and brighter in heaven—remember the time of youth, and make these blest with



the blessedness to which ye yourselves once looked! All ye who know what love is, bid these love one another, and be happy!"

While he yet spake, many came and showered offerings at his feet: aged parents, whose children had gone away to be no longer supports on earth but watching angels in heaven, and who, clinging feebly to each other, went slowly following to their rest; women—to whom the name of wife was a long-vanished or never-fulfilled dream—who had learned to walk, meek and pale, over the grave of love, the treasures of their virgin hearts unknown, save to heaven and the unseen land of souls.

And then the whole multitude shouted and sang for joy, and went to seek the bridegroom and the bride.

It was a marriage—not like earthly marriages, celebrated in pomp and gay hypocrisy, but quiet, solemn—full of a happiness too deep for mirth. The young bride knelt, clothed in white, her head myrtle-garlanded. Few wedding guests were there, save those who loved them both: the mother who gave a daughter and received a son; and the sisters who took into their dear circle of affection one more, to whom "sister" had hitherto been an unuttered name. She murmured it now in a tone which foretold gentle yielding, and household peace between them all for evermore. Ruth-like, she had said in her heart, "Thy people shall be my people;" and in that spirit she came among them. Once she turned, and knelt with her bridegroom for the blessing of the mother whom she had made his

mother also. Then she arose, left all, and followed him who was to her—

“ Friend, father, brother, home, and universe ! ”

I stood with Cyril, and beheld this happy sight—this true *marriage*. In both our hearts was one thought ; the same, and yet different ; there came to our lips one name—“ *Lilias* ! ” It was uttered with a sigh, which might have been mournful ; but in this land of peace and holiness even the sting of sorrow was taken away. The regret for lost joy, and for joy never realized, had alike grown calm. We looked upon it as souls departed look back on their earth-sufferings ; from whose immortal height of perfect knowledge and perfect peace, the deepest woe appears only a light cloud round the mountain’s foot whose summit is in the skies.

Cyril and I grasped each other’s hands, and left the scene.

The day fled like one of those quiet happy days of which every hour goes by, leaving some grateful odour of duties performed and pleasures enjoyed ; and like this, Cyril said, passed every day in Eden-land. As we sat watching the sunset over the western hills, there came into my mind solemn thoughts of the closing of man’s brief day. In the morning I had beheld the golden shadow of the angel of Love ; now it seemed to me that in the sighing of the solemn trees, in the gathering clouds that darkened the sky, I felt the presence of the angel of Death. I spoke my thoughts to Cyril, and he answered—

"It may be so. Arise, and let us go forth to meet him."

We went forth, up the mountain, towards the cottages of the mountaineers; and as we climbed higher and higher, we seemed to follow the steps of the departing sun, and the eventide became clear and beautiful, though solemn still. It was a twilight less like the fading than the dawning day.

And like the twilight peace without was that which dwelt within the dwelling which Cyril entered. There lay—feebly fluttering within its prison, waiting the hour of its summons—an immortal soul. As I crossed the threshold, I seemed to feel the breath of the Death-angel who stood there, invisible, with folded wings, until those pinions should be lifted to bear away one more spirit to the unseen land.

"Hush! tread softly," said a young man's voice. He who spoke arose from the ground where he had been kneeling at the feet of two people, on whom he gazed with the tenderness of an only child. They were both old; but the woman's face, as it rested on her husband's breast, had a pallor deeper than that of age. From the path they had long trodden together her feet were now the first to glide. She knew it—he knew it—and yet both leaned calmly, heart to heart as ever, until the hour of parting should come. A brief parting it was—so brief, that they talked of it without a single tear.

She turned a little, and gave her hand to Cyril.

"I am going," she said, and smiled.


"The blessing of all whom thy pure life has blessed, go with thee, my sister," he answered.

We all echoed "Amen:" even the aged husband and the son. They never so much as said, "Beloved! stay with us a little longer;" for they knew that God had called her. Who should set himself, his human will and human love, against God's?

She spoke of many things—things of earth—life's joys and its sorrows. She was thankful for all, and showed how all had worked together for good. Much of her speech was a mystery to me; but thus far I understood—that these, like Cyril, had come through much affliction to the Happy Isle.

Then she laid her head closer to that true breast on which it had lain so many years, and her feeble fingers twined themselves amidst the shining curls of her tall son, who rested his cheek on her lap as though he were again a little child. Thus she reclined, silently enclasped until death by those whose love had brightened life. They waited with her: they went so near the dark portal as almost to hear the echo of the voice that called; and then they gave her from their tender arms, into those of God.

She was dead! No, not dead: she had only "gone away." *He* said so: the old man whose wife she had been; half of whose soul she had taken with her to the eternal land. There was no murmuring—no weeping: for here, they believed what the people of earth only *said*—that death, a righteous and peaceful death, is immortal gain. They knew that her spirit was now



new-born into a diviner existence, thence to rise, sphere after sphere, until its pure essence became one with the All-Divine. So they laid her down—yet not *her*, but the likeness of her beloved form—and went out, father and son clasped in each other's arms. They stood looking upwards, following, as it were, her flight among the stars.

I watched them with a solemn wonder. It had troubled me at first to think that even in this happy place there was death—awful death—the great punishment of life. But now all was changed. I saw that nothing which God ordains is *punishment*; that greater, far greater than they who revelled in a perpetual Elysium of repose—greater than the many-centuried dwellers in Avillion, were these of Eden-land—who might pass through the gate of death into immortality.

After a space, I know not whether of hours or days—for the time seemed strange to me—I heard Cyril's voice saying—

“Come, my son, come with me into our garden!”

“Is it a fair garden?” I asked, as I walked with him.

“Very fair, in Heaven's sight!”

His words were strange; but I knew their import when he brought me to the spot: a little dell, sheltered among the hills, and planted all thick with flowers—at once an earthly and a heavenly garden. It was a place of graves.

Thither, while we entered, the son and the husband were bringing their beloved dead.

The burial was such as I had never seen in the former world. It was here no more than laying in the earth holy seed—sown for the resurrection. No black garments were allowed—no mock solemnities of crawling stranger-steps and muffled stranger-faces. A few prayers were said, less to hallow the rest of the dead—that needed no hallowing—than to speak peace and hope to the living. Then the soft earth fell, a kindly veil; and flowers were planted above, that no sign should be left of the mingling of dust with dust, save what was beautiful and dear.

Thus, in the summer twilight, we all stood around the new mound in that peaceful “garden;” and the little birds sang, and one pale, beautiful star came out in heaven, like the spirit of the departed watching us smilingly.

Then arose in the still air the voice of Cyril.

“We thank Thee, O Lord of life, that thou hast for a season sent death into Thy world, to make our faith eternal, and our love immortal as Thyself!”

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#### CHAPTER XIII.

THUS I dwelt with Cyril in Eden-land. Day by day we traversed it together, and I learned all things pertaining thereunto. After a space, my spirit began to turn within itself, and I pondered less over the marvellous things around me than over my own individual life. I tried to gather up the awful mysteries of my

fate since the day when I had lain on the bosom of my Liliás, struggling with the horrible pain from which the German mystic had freed me, only to plunge me into worse horrors.

And when Cyril, watching my countenance, tried to read therein my thoughts, I opened my heart to him and related the fearful tale. As I went on, my passions rose; and the hatred and revenge with which the Mystic had inspired me, filled my soul once more.

Cyril looked upon me with his calm eyes.

"My son—my son! there is yet much alloy in that proud spirit. Know you not, that he who enters Edenland must learn as his first lesson—to forgive?"

"I forgive? Oh, Cyril! I cannot. It is bitter—bitter! Was he not worse than a murderer? My own life was nothing: but Liliás—oh, Liliás!"

My heart melted within me: I could have wept!

He, too, was softened: he ever was at the sound of that name. But he gently reproved me.

"Wilfred, your fate is hard: but have you no pity for that miserable man? How know you what undeserved suffering he might have endured—what torments might have goaded him on to seek the Happy Isles. You are at peace—then pardon him."

"I know no peace," I cried. "My soul yearns even here for home and for Liliás. Oh, friend and kinsman, is there nothing to kill this worm that continually gnaws at my heart—the bitter memory of the past?"

Cyril answered solemnly—

"He who has pardoned, or will pardon, the sins

of the whole world—the whole universe—forbids us to know peace, even here, until we too have pardoned all our enemies.

I sat speechless, in a dull despair.

“Then let me die!” was my thought; but I dared not breathe it. To die—to pass unforgiving into the presence of the All-Merciful!

“Come—go with me, my son, and I will show you it is not so hard to forgive.”

I followed Cyril, even to the “garden.” There, beside the little mound which his own hands had so lately raised, sat the husband of the dead. He was watering the flowers, and playing with them tenderly, as if they were his children.

“Herman,” said Cyril, as the old man raised his meek and placid face, “tell this young passionate spirit that shrinks from forgiving wrong—tell my son Wilfred the story of thy life, and that of the pure soul who is now with God.”

“She *was* a pure, beautiful soul, ever! And she suffered much wrong; but she forgave it all—all! Must I indeed recount these things again?” said the old man, dreamily.

There was no answer, and he continued—

“She was of your land, Cyril—the land which on earth is renowned for its wealth, its wisdom, and its just laws. Just laws? Merciful Heaven! is there justice beneath the sun?”

He paused a moment, and then went on—

“I was a stranger and a foreigner, and she an English



girl, yet she loved me. I came of a wild, half-mad race (so men said), yet still she loved me. There was none to rule her except an old, rich, cruel woman, with whom she dwelt. This wretch turned me from the door, like a dog, and put me openly to shame. Then my gentle love arose—rose like a tigress bereft of her young; she said aloud—mark the words, for they *were* marked, ay, and for blood!—‘*that retribution would follow.*’

“That night the wicked woman lay slain in her bed, and they snatched my newly-married wife from my arms, and accused her as a murderess.

“O evil, evil world! O horrible destiny which wrapped her round as with a coil! My pure innocence! To say that the little hand which I cherished like a bird in my bosom, bore on it the life-drops of a murdered human creature!

“Well, the bloodhounds of the law hunted her down: they made all clear, even to the mark of her fairy feet, that fled trembling to me when the house was still—she knowing not whence the awful stillness came. It was all plain—plain enough for the law to believe in; though some tender, merciful souls, who felt the responsibility of that accusation which can rarely be definitely proved, and on whose truth or falsehood hangs a human life—these still doubted of her guilt. But their few faint arguments were vain. Her doom was pronounced—the doom of DEATH!

“I dare not speak of myself or her: I speak of the world. I cry—as I had done then, but despair made

me mad and dumb—‘O man, how darest thou set thyself in the place of God, to judge life and death! How darest thou wrest His Word to sanction murder? When He said “blood for blood,” He ruled His people with a visible sway: His eye inevitably marked the slayer. Can *thine*? Art thou omniscient too? Know that if one man perish innocent, it is enough to lay on thy head, and on the head of each administrator of a cursed law, the sin of Cain the murderer!’ ”

As he ceased, the old man sank on the grass exhausted; but his terrible words rang on my ear like a judgment. Oh, that through me they might pierce the world!

He spoke again, fainter:—

“Her doom approached. Pleadings for mercy came: ‘She was so young! Even if guilty, it was hard to die!’ But the law’s iron tongue knelled, ‘Let her die!’ and man echoed it. One, a priest, even preached the justice of taking life for life—O God! and this man called himself a disciple of Him who was put to death at Calvary!

“Hour after hour fled; each tick of the clock falling on my ear like blood-drops. I sat beneath the dial, and as it moved I cursed Time—aye, almost Him who created Time—that it should be made the instrument of a slow death! Each man that passed me by, carelessly lounging through the brief hours on which hung another life, precious as his own, I yelled after him, ‘Thou, too, art a murderer!’

“At last but one day came between her and death.

Then, and not till then, they suffered me to feel the peace of her presence; for it was peace, even then. Her words fell on my burning heart like dew. Her meekness was beautiful, her forgiveness was sublime! She clung to my bosom; she knelt at my feet: she stopped my outcries of despair with embraces, my curses with prayers.

“Those who stood by melted into tears, and one who half-believed her guilty, went forth from the cell to spend his whole existence in striving to annul that terrible law of death by which man arrogates to himself the judgments of God.

“When the first paroxysm was over, her calmness made me calm. I entreated, and that good man who went from us entreated also, that we might have a brief space alone. The law which robs its victims of a whole precious lifetime of repentance or atonement might well grant the mercy of a few short minutes, whether to guilt or innocence: so it was permitted to her.

“I took her in my arms and cradled her in my breast; my darling, on whose sinless brow lay the brand of murder! Suddenly the thought came,—that one day more—and the form I clasped, the fair neck whereon my kisses rained, would——

“My blood curdled into ice, and then a horrible determination entered my soul. I said, in a hissing whisper, ‘Love, I will save thee!’ and I showed her a ring I wore, small and beautiful, but which shut up within it poison—death. ‘Sweetest, it is nothing; it

will come in a moment, like sleep. My beloved, have pity on us both! let me save thee.'

"She looked amazed and doubting: 'How?'

"'Wilt thou, now, in my safe arms,—wilt thou die?'

"She drew herself from me—not in alarm, but in meek reproach:

"'No, love, not even for thee! I am in God's hands. I will not take the life He gave.'

"She snatched the ring from me, and trampled it under foot.

"We were to have one more interview—the last. But ere it came, a superhuman energy and cunning had dawned within me, and taught me how to save her. My father, a German physician, was a man of wondrous knowledge. From him I had learned a secret which would make the frame as rigid as stone, so as to be for a time insensible to all assaults against life, while it preserved all the appearance of death, until suspended animation returned. I made the elixir: I calculated all—the time before it would take effect, and how long its power would last. I hid the tiny phial; fastening it by a hair among my long, thick curls; and then I went to the prison.

"When, human agony mastering all her strength, she lay fainting in my arms, I dropped on her lips the potion, death-bringing yet life-restoring, and then I went away, without a farewell.

"I heard the howl of the multitude, the thousands met to gloat over the sight of a slaughter according to

law—a score of men formally destroying one helpless woman, who seemed already dead.

Not an hour after, the true murderer, conscience-stricken, gave himself up to justice, and the ministers of the law—ay, some of them 'honest men—found that on their heads and that of their children lay the guilt of innocent blood!

“I let them think so; I wished the curse to sink them to the lowest deep; and then I snatched from them my own pure dead, and fled. She woke to life and happiness upon her husband's breast!

“I wrote to my poor dream-haunted father, a German philosopher, whose worn brain was already half maddened with misery, and bade him seek us in the West, where human wickedness could trouble us no more. Then we two, my wife and I, sailed far away. But doom followed us still. The vessel never reached the land—at least, no earthly land. *That* happened—which I may not speak of to earthly ears—and we and all the ship's crew came hither to the island of peace. Thank God, bless God, for all!”

“And thy father?” I cried, while a sudden light darted through my mind; “tell me who was thy father?”

“We forget all such sorrows here; but his name on earth was Johann Foerster.”

I fell on my knees:—

“Bear witness, heaven! that now at last from the bottom of my soul *I forgive!*”

Then I told him my story, and we embraced one another, and were at peace.

While we yet sat in the holy "garden" and talked, our speech was broken by a heavy thundering sound which came from the overhanging hills. I looked up, and saw that a portion of the rock had loosened from its place, and was falling, bringing death in its passage, to the plain beneath. A moment more, and, shuddering, I saw that right in the path of this avalanche of doom lay sleeping a young mountaineer. It was Herman Foerster's son!

With the speed of thought I sprang up the crags, my feet sinking at each step. I reached the spot; I shook him out of his sleep; but he clung to me, half bewildered still. It was too late. I heard the father's shriek; I saw Cyril's upturned face; and then the thunder rolled over us, stunning, deafening. It passed, and we were both alive.

Alive! but for how long? The ground had been torn from under us. We stood on a jutting precipice—a mere speck left between the perpendicular rock above and the yawning abyss below. Even this narrow spot of safety crumbled and quivered beneath our feet. We were two, and there was room but for one.

I paused. Revenge lay in my grasp. The grandson of Johann Foerster, the youth in whose veins ran my enemy's blood, was in my hands. Which should it be—life or death? vengeance or self-sacrifice? Life or death, revenge or sacrifice!

My choice was made. In one sigh of prayer I committed my soul to God; in one murmur I uttered the name of Lilius; then, with one farewell grasp of the boy's hand, I plunged into the awful void below.

\* \* \* \* \*

I awoke. Oh, marvel beyond belief! I lay on the vessel's deck—I felt round my neck those dear soft arms. All had been a dream!

I heard the tender voice of my wife:—

“Wilfred, dearest, you have slept scarce an hour, and you wake, all calm, and so well!”

I leaned my head on her bosom, and our tears mingled together. Then I met the kind, half-melancholy gaze of the old German mystic. Lilius turned even from me to clasp his hand, and thank him.

He replied—

“Thank not me, but God!”

I spoke to him, the mistiness of my dream, which I knew was only a dream, struggling vainly with reality:—

“Dear friend, stay with us, and let us be to you in the stead of all you have lost!”

But he only shook his head, and said meekly—

“It is impossible! I have not yet found the Happy Isles!”

\* \* \* \* \*

In our dear home—the home my wandering fancy pictured—I dwell with Lilius. The old house is musical with sweet young voices; baby footsteps patter, fairy-like, through its dim chambers. It is

indeed a haunted house—haunted by all good spirits of peace, and happiness, and love. Liliās and I look towards the future and smile; the shadows of death, and sickness, and sorrow, have passed from us, and we shall grow old among our children's children.

Yet never, while life lasts, shall we altogether lose the memory of that strange dream of mine.



## THE LAST OF THE RUTHVENS.

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### PART I.

“DAVIE CALDERWOOD! worthy tutor and master!—Davie Calderwood!”—The old man made no answer to the call, which he scarce seemed even to hear. He sat not far from the shadow of his college walls, watching the little silvery ripples of the Cam. His doctor’s robes hid a homely dress of gray; his large feet, dangling over the river bank, were clumsily shod, and his white close-cropped hair gave him a Puritanical look, when compared with the cavalier air of the two youths who stood behind him.

“Davie Calderwood—wake up, man! News!—great news! And from Scotland!” added the elder lad in a cautious whisper.

It pierced the torpor of the old man: he started up with trembling eagerness.

“Eh, my dear bairn!—I mean my lord—my Lord Gowrie!”

"Hush!" said the youth bitterly; "let not the birds of the air carry that sound. Was it not crushed out of the earth a year ago? Call me William Ruthven, or else plain William, till with my good sword I win back my title and my father's name."

"Willie—Willie!" murmured the younger brother in anxious warning.

"He's feared — wee Patrick!" laughed William Ruthven. "He thinks that walls have ears, and rivers tongues, and that every idle word I say will go with speed to the vain, withered old hag in London, or to daft King Jamie in Edinburgh! He thinks he shall yet see brother Willie's love-locks floating from the top of the Tolbooth beside those of winsome Aleck and noble John."

The elder youth spoke in that bitter jesting tone used to hide keenest suffering; but the younger one, a slight delicate boy of nineteen, clung to his brother's arm, and burst into tears.

"My lord," said Master David Calderwood, "ye suld be mair tender o' the lad—your ae brother—your mother's youngest bairn! Ye speak too lightly o' things awfu' to tell of—awfu' to mind. Master Patrick," he added, laying his hand gently on the boy's shoulder, "ye are thinking of ilk puir bodie given to the fowls of the air and to the winds of heaven, at Stirling, Edinburgh, and Dundee; but ye forget that whiles man dishonours the helpless dust, evermair God keeps the soul. Therefore think ye thus o' your twa brothers—the bonnie Earl of Gowrie, and

noble Alexander Ruthven—that are baith now with God.”

As he spoke, the doctor’s voice faltered, for nature had put into his huge, ill-formed frame a gentle spirit; and though he had fled from his country, and never beheld it since the year when his beloved lord, the first Earl of Gowrie, and father of these youths, perished on the scaffold—still, amidst all the learning and honours gained in his adopted home, David Calderwood carried in his bosom the same true Scottish heart. Perhaps it yearned more over the boy Patrick, in that he was, like his long-dead father, a quiet retiring student, given to all abstruse philosophy; whereas William the elder was a youth of bold spirit, who chafed under his forced retirement, and longed to tread in the footsteps of his ancestors, even though they led to the same bloody end.

“Well, good master,” he said, “when you have wept enough with Patrick, hear my news.”

“Is it from your mother, the pair hunted dove, auld and worn, flying hither and thither about the ruins of her nest?”

Lord Gowrie’s—let us give him this title borne for three months, then attainted, but which yet fondly lingered on the lips of two faithful friends, David Calderwood and Lettice his daughter—Lord Gowrie’s brow reddened, and instinctively he put his hand to where his sword should have hung. Then he muttered angrily, “Ah, I forget I am no earl, no Scottish knight, but only a poor Cambridge student. But,” he added, his face kindling, “though the lightning has fallen on the parent

trunk and its two brave branches, and though the rest are trodden under foot of men, still there is life, bold, fresh life in the old tree. It shall grow up and shelter her yet—my noble, long-enduring mother—the first, the best, the——No; she shall *not* be the last Lady Gowrie.”

While speaking, a flush deeper even than that of youth’s enthusiasm burned on the young earl’s cheek, and he looked up to the window where Lettice sat—sweet Lettice Calderwood, sweeter even than she was fair! She at a distance dimly saw the look; she met it with a frank smile—the smile a single-hearted, happy girl would cast willingly on all the world.

“The news—the news!”—murmured old David. “My bairns, ye talk and ye rave, but ye dinna tell the news.”

“My mother writes that the cloud seems passing from our house; for the Queen Anne—she favours us still, despite her lord—the Queen Anne has secretly sent for our sister Beatrice to court.”

“Beatrice, whom brother Alexander loved more than all of us,” said Patrick. But the elder brother frowned, and rather harshly bade him hold his peace.

“Patrick is a child, and knows nothing,” said the young earl; “but I know all. What care I for this weak queen’s folly or remembered sin? what care I whether my bold brother Alexander encouraged her erring love or not, if through her means I creep back into my father’s honoured seat? Oh shame that I *can* only creep; that I must enter Scotland like a thief, and steal in at the court holding on to a woman’s robe, when

I would fain come with fire and sword, to crush among the ashes of his own palace the murderer of my race!"

He spoke with a resolute fierceness, strange in such a youth; his black brows contracted, and his stature seemed to swell and grow. Simple Davie Calderwood looked and trembled.

"Ye're a Ruthven, true and bold; but ye're no like the Earl o' Gowrie. I see in your face your father's father—him that rose from his dying bed to be a shedder of blood—him that slew Rizzio in Holyrood!"

"And when I stand in Holyrood—whether I creep in there or force my way with my sword—I will kneel down on that bloody spot, and pray Heaven to make *me* too as faithful an avenger."

Then turning off his passion with a jest, as he often did, Lord Gowrie said gaily to his brother, "Come, Patrick, look not so pale; tell our good master the rest of the news—that to-night, this very night, thou and I must start for bonnie Scotland!"

"Who is talking of bonnie Scotland?" said a girl's voice, young indeed, but yet touched with that inexplicable tone which never comes until life's first lessons have been learned—those lessons, whether of joy or grief, which leave in the child's careless bosom a woman's heart.

Lord Gowrie turned quickly and looked at Lettice—rapturously, yet bashfully, as a youth looks at his first idol. Then he repeated his intention of departure, though in a tone less joyous than before. Lettice heard,

without emotion as it seemed, only that her two thin hands—she was a little creature, pale and slight—were pressed tightly together. There are some faces which, by instinct or by force of will, can hide all feeling, and then it is often the hands which tell the tale—the fluttering fingers, the tight clench, the palms rigidly crushed together. But these tokens of suffering no one sees: no one saw them in Lettice Calderwood.

“Do ye no grieve, my daughter, over these bairns that go from us? Wae’s me! but there’s danger in ilka step to baith the lads.”

“Are both going?” asked Lettice; and her eye wandered towards the younger brother, who had moved a little apart, and stood by the little river, plucking leaves, and throwing them down the stream. “It is a long, severe journey, and Master Patrick has been so ill, and is not yet strong,” added the girl, speaking with that grave dignity which, as mistress of the household, she sometimes assumed, and which made her seem far older than her years.

“Patrick is a weakly fellow, to be sure,” answered Lord Gowrie, inwardly smiling over his own youthful strength and beauty; “but I will take care of him—he will go with his brother.”

“Yes,” said Patrick, overhearing all, as it appeared. But he said no more: he was a youth of few words. Very soon Calderwood and the young lord began to talk over the projected journey. But Patrick sat down by the river-bank, and began idly plucking and examining the meadow-flowers, just as if his favourite

herbal and botanical science were the only interests of life.

“Patrick!” whispered Lettice’s kind, sisterly voice. She sometimes forgot the difference of rank and blood in her tender compassion for the young proscribed fugitives who had been sent, in such utter destitution and misery, to her father’s care—“Patrick!”

“Yes, Mistress Lettice.”

“The evening closes cold; take this!” She had brought a cloak to wrap round him.

“You are very kind, very thoughtful—like a *sister*.” Saying this, he turned quickly, and looked at her. Lettice smiled. Whether gladsome or sorry, she could always bend her lips in that pale, grave smile.

“Well, then, listen to me, as you always do; I being such a staid, wise old woman——”

“Though a year younger than I.”

“Still, listen to me. My Lord Gowrie, your brother, is rash and bold; you must be prudent for the sake of both. When you go from us, Patrick, cease dreaming, and use your wisdom. You have indeed the strength and wisdom of a man; it will be needed. Let not William bring you into peril; take care of him—and of yourself.”

Here the lips that spoke so womanly, grave, and calm, began to tremble; and Lettice, hearing her name called, went away.

Patrick seemed mechanically to repeat to himself her last words, whether in pleasure, pain, or indifference, it was impossible to tell. Then his features relapsed into

their usual expression—thoughtful, quiet, and passionless. An *old-young* face it was—a mingling of the child with the man of eld, but with no trace of youth between—a face such as we see sometimes, and fancy that we read therein the coming history as plainly written as in a book. So while, as the evening passed, Lord Gowrie's fiery spirit busied itself about plots and schemes, the fate of kingdoms and of kings—and David Calderwood, stirred from his learned equipoise, troubled his simple mind with anxiety concerning his two beloved pupils—Lettice hid all her thoughts in her heart, brooding tremblingly over them there. But the young herbalist sat patiently pulling his flowers to pieces, and ruminating meanwhile; his eyes fixed on the little rippling stream. He seemed born to be one of those meek philosophers who through life sit still, and let the world roll by with all its tumults, passions, and cares. They are above it; or, as some would deem, below it. But in either case it touches not them.

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It was the dawn of a September day, gloomy and cold. All things seemed buried in a dull sleep, except the Cam that went murmuring over its pebbles hour after hour, from night till morn. Lettice heard it under her window, as she stood in the pale light, fastening her head-tire with trembling hands. They were just starting—the two young Scottish cavaliers. Both had cast off the dress of the student, and appeared as befitted their birth. Bold, noble, and handsome, looked the



young Earl William in his gay doublet, with his sword by his side. As he walked with Lettice to the garden (he had half-intreated, half-commanded to have a rose given by her hand), his manner seemed less boyish—more courtly and tender withal. His last words, too, as he rode away, were a gay compliment, and an outburst of youthful hope; alluding to the time when he should come back endowed with the forfeited honours of his race, and choose, not out of Scottish but of English maidens, a “Lady Gowrie.”

Patrick, stealing after, a little paler—a little more silent than usual—affectionately bade his master adieu; and to the hearty blessing and good-speed only whispered “Amen.” Then he took Lettice’s hand; he did not kiss it, as his brother had gracefully and courteously done; but he clasped it with a light cold clasp, saying gently, “Farewell! Lettice, my kind *sister*.”

She calmly echoed the farewell. But when the sound of the horses’ feet died away, she went slowly up to her little chamber, shut the door, sat down, and wept. Once only, looking at her little hand—holding it as if there still lingered on it a vanished touch—the deep colour rose in her cheek, and over her face there passed a quick, sharp pang.

“His sister—always his *sister*!” She said no more. After a while she dried her tears, wrapped round her heart that veil of ordinary outer life which a woman must always wear, and went down to her father.

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"Lettice, what are these torn papers that thou art fastening together with thy needle? Are they writings or problems of mine?"

"Not this time, father," said Lettice, meekly; "they are fragments left by your two pupils."

"That is, by Patrick; William did not love to study, except that fantastic learning which all the Ruthvens loved—the occult sciences. Whose papers are these?"

"Master Patrick's; he may want them when he returns."

"*When!* Ah, the dear bairn, his puir father's ain son; will I ever see his face again?"

There was no answer save that of silence and paleness. Lettice's fingers worked on. But a dull, cold shadow seemed to spread itself over the room—over everywhere she turned her eyes; duller than the gloomy evening—colder than the cold March rain which beat against the narrow college-windows—that shadow crept over her heart. She looked like one who for many days and weeks had borne on her spirit—not a heavy load, that is easier to bear, but a restless struggle—sometimes pain, sometimes joy—doubt, fear, expectation, faith—wild longing, followed by blank endurance. It was now a long time since she had learned the whole bitter meaning of those words, "The hope deferred which maketh the heart sick."

"My dear lassie," said the old doctor, rousing himself from a mathematical calculation which had degenerated into a mere every-day reverie, "where hae ye keepit the puir young earl's letter, that said

he and Patrick were baith coming back to Cambridge in a week? Can ye no tell how lang it is sin syne?"

Lettice could have answered at once—could have told the weeks, days, hours—each passing slow like years—but she did not. She paused as though to reckon, and then she said, "It is nigh two months, if I count right."

"Twa months! Alas, alas!"

"Do you think, father," she said slowly, striving to speak for the first time what had been so long pent up that its utterance shook her whole frame with tremblings—"do you think that any harm has come to the poor young gentlemen?"

"I pray God no! Lettice, do you mind what our puir Willie—I canna say 'the earl'—tauld us of their great good fortune through the Queen; how that he would soon be living in Edinburgh as a grand lord, and his brother should end his studies at St. Andrews; only Patrick said he loved better to come back to Cambridge, and to his auld master. The dear bairn! Do ye mind all this, Lettice?"

"Yes, father." Ah, truly poor Lettice did!

"Then, my child, we needna fear for them. They are twa young gentlemen o' rank, and maybe they lead a merry life, and that whiles gars them forget auld friends; but they'll aye come back safe in time."

So saying, the old doctor settled himself in his high-backed chair, and contentedly went to sleep. His daughter continued her work until the papers were all

arranged and it grew too dark to see, then she closed her eyes and pondered.

Her thoughts were not what may be call love-thoughts, such as you, young modern maidens, indulge in when you dream of some lover kneeling at your feet, or walking by your side, know yourself adored, and exult in the adoration. No such light emotion ruled Lettice's fancy. Her love—if it *were* love, and she scarce knew it as such—had crept in unwittingly, under the guise of pity, reverence, affection; it had struck its roots deep in her nature; and though it bore no flowers, its life was one with the life of her heart. She never paused to think, “Do I love?” or “Am I loved?” but her whole being flowed into that thought, wave after wave, like a stream that insensibly glides into one channel, leaving all the rest dry.

Lettice sat and thought mournfully over the many weeks of wearying expectation for him who never came. How at first the hours flew, winged with restless joy, how she lay down in hope, and rose in hope, and said to herself, calmly smiling, “To-morrow—to-morrow!” How afterwards she strove to make those words into a daily balm to still fear and pain that would not sleep; how at last she breathed them wildly, hour by hour of each blank day, less believing in them than lifting them up like a cry of despair which *must* be answered. But it never was answered; and the silence now had grown so black and dull around her, that it pressed down all struggles—left her not even strength for fears.

She had feared very much at first. The young Earl William, so sanguine, so bold, might have been deceived. The king's seeming lenity might be but assumed, until he could crush the poor remnant of the Ruthven race. She pondered continually over the awful tale of the Gowrie plot; often at night, in her dreams, she saw the ensanguined axe, and the two heads, so beautiful and young, mouldering away on the Tolbooth. Sometimes beside them she saw another — Horror! she knew *it* well—the pale, boyish cheek—the thoughtful brow. Then she would wake in shudderings and cries; and falling on her knees, pray that wherever he was—whether or no he might gladden her eyes again—Heaven would keep him safe, and have pity upon her.

Again she thought of him in prosperity, living honoured and secure under the glory of the Ruthven line—forgetting old friends, as her father had said. Well, and what right had she to murmur? She did not—save that at times, even against her will, the selfish cry of weak human tenderness would rise up—“Alas, thou hast all things, and I—I perish for want!” But her conscience ever answered, “He neither knows nor sees, so with him there is no wrong.”

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Night, heavy night, fell down once more. Lettice had learned to long for the dull stupor it brought—a little peace, a little oblivion mercifully closing each blank day. “Is it not time for rest, father?” she

often asked long ere the usual hour; and she was so glad to creep to her little bower-chamber, and shut out the moonbeams and the starlight, and lie in darkness and utter forgetfulness, until lulled to sleep by the ripple of the stream close by. There had been a time when she had either sat up with her father, or else lain awake until midnight, listening for steps in the garden—for voices beneath the window—when every summons at the gate made her heart leap wildly. But all this was passed now.

Lettice put down the lamp, took off her coif, and unbound her hair. Before retiring she opened the window, and gazed out into the night, which was cold, but very clear. She half-leaned forward, and stretched out her hands to the north. No words can paint the look her countenance wore. It was yearning, imploring, despairing, like that of a soul longing to depart and follow another soul already gone. In her eyes was an intensity that seemed mighty enough to pierce through all intervening space, and fly, dove-winged, to its desire. Then the lids drooped, the burning tears fell, and her whole frame sank collapsed, an image of hopeless, motionless dejection.

She was roused by a noise—the dash of oars on the usually-deserted river. She shut the window hastily, blushing lest the lamp should have revealed her attitude and her emotion to any stranger without. The sound of oars ceased—there were footsteps up the garden alleys—there was her father's eager voice at the

door, mingled with other well-known voices. They were coming!—they were come!

In a moment all the days, weeks, months of weary waiting were swept away like clouds. The night of her sorrow was forgotten as though it had never been.

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“And now that I am returned, thou wilt not give me another flower, Mistress Lettice?” said the young earl, as he followed her up the garden-walks in the fair spring morning. She had risen early, for sleep had been driven away by joy.

“There are no flowers now, at least none gay enough to be worth your wearing. Daisies and violets would ill suit that courtly dress,” said the maiden, speaking blithely out of her full-hearted content.

“Does it displease you, then? Shall I banish my silver-hilted sword, and my rich doublet with three hundred points, and don the poor student’s hoddie gray? I would do it, fair damsel, and willingly, for thee!” And he smiled with a little conscious pride, as if he knew well that six months passed in the precincts of a court had transformed the bashful youth into an accomplished cavalier—brave, handsome, winning, yet pure and noble at heart, as the young knights were in the golden time of Sidney and of Raleigh.

Lettice regarded him in frank admiration. “Truly, my Lord Gowrie, you are changed. Scarcely can I dare to give you the name you once honoured me by

permitting. How shall I call you and Master Patrick my brothers?"

"*I wish it not,*" said the young man, hastily. "*As for Patrick—never mind Patrick,*" as Lettice's eyes seemed wandering to the river-side, where the younger Ruthven sat in his old seat. "*You see he is quite happy with his herbal and his books of philosophy. Let him stay there; for I would fain have speech with you.*" He led her into a shady path, and began to speak hurriedly. "*Lettice, do you know that I may soon be summoned back to Scotland—not as a captive, but as the reinstated Earl of Gowrie? And, Lettice*"—here his voice faltered, and his cheek glowed, and he looked no more the bold cavalier, but a timid youth in his first wooing—"dear Lettice, if I might win my heart's desire, I would not depart alone."

"Not depart alone! Then thou wilt not leave Patrick with us, as was planned?" said the girl, uttering the first thought that rose to her mind, and then blushing for the same.

"I spoke not of Patrick—he may do as he wills. I spoke of some one dearer than brother or sister; of her who—"

"What! is it come to that?" merrily laughed out the unconscious girl. "Is our William, at once, without sign or token, about to bring to Cambridge, and then carry away home, a bonnie Lady Gowrie?"

The earl seemed startled by a sudden doubt. "It is strange you should speak thus! Are you mocking



me, or is it a womanly device to make me woo in plainer terms? Hear, then, Lettice! Lettice that I love! It is you I would win, you whom I would carry home in triumph, my beautiful, my wife, my Lady Gowrie!" She stood transfixed, looking at him, not with blushes, not with maiden shame, but in a sort of dull amaze.

"Do my words startle you, sweet one? Forgive me, then, for I scarce know what I say. Only I love you—I love you! Come to my heart, my Lettice, my bride that shall be;" and he stretched out his arms to enfold her. But Lettice, uttering a faint cry, glided from his vain clasp, and fled into the house.

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In their deepest affections women rarely judge by outward show. The young earl, gifted with all qualities to charm a lady's eye, had been loved as a brother—nothing more. The dreamy Patrick, in whose apparently passionless nature lay the mystery wherein such as Lettice ever delight—whose learning awed, while his weakness attracted tender sympathy—he it was who had unconsciously won the treasure, which a man, giving all his substance, could not gain—a woman's first, best love.

Her wooer evidently dreamed not of the truth. She saw him still walking where she had left him, or passing under her window, looking up rather anxiously, yet smiling. One thought only rose clearly out of the chaos of Lettice's mind—that he must be answered;

that she must not let him deceive himself—no, not for an hour. What she should say she mournfully knew—but how to say it? Some small speech she tried to frame; but she had never been used to veil any thought of her innocent heart before him she treated as a brother. It was so hard to feel that all this must be changed now.

Lettice was little more than eighteen years old, but the troublous life of a motherless girl had made her self-dependent and firm. Therefore, after a while, courage came unto her again. Strengthened by her one great desire to do right, she descended into the garden, and walked slowly down the alley to meet the earl. His greeting was full of joy.

“Did I scare her from me, my bird? And has she flown back of her own accord to her safe nest—her shelter now and evermore?” And he extended his arms with a look of proud tenderness, such as a young lover wears when he feels that in wooing his future wife he has cast off the lightsome follies of boyhood, and entered on the duties and dignities of man.

Lettice never looked up, or her heart would have smote her—that heart which, already half-crushed, had now to crush another’s. Would that women felt more deeply how bitter it is to inflict this suffering, and if wilfully incurred, how heavy is the sin! Even Lettice, with her conscience all clear, felt as though she were half guilty in having won his unvalued love. Pale and trembling she began to say the words she had fixed on as best, humblest, kindest—“My Lord Gowrie——”

"Nay, sweet Lettice, call me William, as you ever used to do in the dear old times."

At this allusion her set speech failed, and she burst into tears. "Oh, William, why did you not always remain my brother? I should have been happy then!"

"And now?"

"I am very—very miserable."

There was a pause, during which Lord Gowrie's face changed, and he seemed to wrestle with a vague fear. At last he said, "Wherefore?" in a brief, cold tone, which calmed Lettice at once.

"Because," she murmured with a mournful earnestness there was no doubting nor gainsaying, "I am not worthy your love, since in my heart there is no answer—none!"

For a moment Lord Gowrie drew himself up with all his ancestral pride. "Mistress Lettice Calderwood, I regret that—that——" He stammered, hesitated, then throwing himself on a wooden seat, and bowing his head, he struggled with a young man's first agony—rejected love.

Lettice knelt beside him. She took his passive hands, and her tears rained over them; but what hope, what comfort could she give? She thought not of their position as maiden and suitor—Lord Gowrie and humble Lettice Calderwood—she only saw her old playmate and friend sitting there overwhelmed with anguish, and it was her hand which had dealt the blow.

"William," she said brokenly, "think not hardly of

me. I would make you happy if I could, but I cannot! I dare not be your wife, not loving you as a wife ought."

"It is quite true, then, you do not love me?" the young earl muttered. But he won no other answer than a sad silence. After a while he broke out again bitterly—"Either I have madly deceived myself, or you have deceived me. Why did you blush and tremble when we met last night? Why, before we met, did I see you gazing so longingly, so passionately, on the way I should have come? Was that look false too?"

Lettice rose up from her knees, her face and neck incarnadine. "My Lord of Gowrie, though you have honoured me, and I am grateful, you have no right——"

"I *have* a right—that of one whose whole life you have withered; whom you have first struck blind, and then driven mad for love! Mistress Calderwood—Lettice——"

In speaking this beloved name, his anger seemed to disperse and crumble away, even as the light touch shivers the molten glass. When again he said "Lettice," it was in a tone so humble, so heartbroken, that, hearing it, she, like a very woman, forgot and forgave all.

"I never did you wrong, William: I never dreamed you loved me. In truth, I never dreamed of love at all, until——"

"Go on."

"I cannot—I cannot!" Again silence, again bitter tears.

After a while Lord Gowrie came to her side, so changed, that he might have lived years in that brief hour. "Lettice," he said, "let there be peace and forgiveness between us. I will go away: you shall not be pained by more wooing. Only, ere I depart, tell me, is there any hope for me in patience, or long waiting, or constant, much-enduring love!"

She shook her head mournfully.

"Then what was not mine to win is surely already won? Though you love not me, still *you love*: I read it in your eyes. If so, I think—I think it would be best mercy to tell me. Then I shall indulge in no vain hope: I shall learn to endure, perhaps to conquer at last. Lettice, tell me: one word—only one?"

But her quivering lips refused to utter it.

"Give some signal—ay, the signal that used to be one of death!—let your kerchief fall!"

For one moment her fingers instinctively clutched it tighter, then they slowly unclasped. The kerchief fell!

Without one word or look Lord Gowrie turned away. He walked, with something of his old proud step, to the alley's end, then threw himself down on the cold, damp turf, as though he wished it had been an open grave.

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When the little circle next met, it was evident to Lettice that Lord Gowrie had told the tale of his rejection to his faithful and loving younger brother. Still

Patrick betrayed not his knowledge, and went on in his old dreamy and listless ways. Once, as pausing in his reading, he saw Lettice glide from the room, pale and very sad, there was a momentary change in his look. It might be pity, or grief, or reproach,—none could tell. He contrived so as to exchange no private word with her until the next morning; when, lounging in his old place, idly throwing pebbles into the river, and watching the watery circles grow, mix, and vanish, there came a low voice in his ear—

“Master Patrick Ruthven!”

He started to hear his full name formally uttered by lips once so frank and sisterly.

“Well; what would you, Lettice?”

“It is early morning; there is no one risen but we two; come with me to the house, for I *must* speak with you. And what I say even the air must not carry. Come, Patrick; for the love of Heaven come!”

Her face was haggard, her words wild. She dragged rather than led him into the room where the two boys had once used to study with her father. There she began speaking hurriedly.

“Did you hear nothing last night?—no footsteps?—no sounds?”

“No; yet I scarce slept.”

“Nor I.” And the two young faces drooped, unable to meet each other. But soon Lettice went on: “At dawn, as I lay awake, it seemed as if there were voices beneath my window. I did not look: I thought it might be——”

"William sometimes rises very early," said the brother gravely.

"It was not Lord Gowrie, for I heard these strange voices speak his name. Your hopes from King James were false! Oh, Patrick, there is danger—great danger! I have learned it all!"

"How?" And rousing himself, the young man watched eagerly Lettice's agitated mien.

"I opened the lattice softly, and listened. When they went away, I followed stealthily to the water's edge. Patrick, they said that on the night but one after this they will return and seize you in the king's name! Fly—fly! Do not let me lose for ever both my brothers!"

And she caught his hands as in her childhood she had used to do, when beseeching him to do for her sake many things which, from dreamy listlessness, he would never have done for his own.

"What must I do, Lettice—I, who know nothing of the world? Why did you not tell all this to William?"

"I—tell William?" She blushed scarlet, and seemed struggling with deep emotion.

"Oh, true—true!" Patrick said, and there seemed a faint waking up in his passionless features. "No matter; I will at once go and tell my brother."

Lettice sat down to wait his return. All her murmur was—"Oh, William—poor William!—so truly loving me whom others love not at all! I turned from thee in thy prosperity, but now shall I save thee and lose

myself?—shall I sacrifice all to thee?” But instinct rather than wisdom whispered to Lettice, that she who weds, knowing her heart is not with her husband, wilfully sacrifices both. In the sight of heaven and earth she takes a false vow, which, if requited not by man, will assuredly be avenged by God.

Patrick Ruthven came back in much agitation. “He says he will not fly; that he heeds neither the prison nor the block; that he has no joy in life, and death is best! Lettice, go to him: save him—you only can!”

“How can I save him?” mournfully Lettice cried.

“By urging him to fly. We can take horse, and cross the country to Harwich, whence a ship sails for France to-night. I know this, for yesterday I, too, was planning how to depart.”

“You?”

“No matter,” said Patrick hurriedly. “Only go to William; compel him to save his life: he will do so at your bidding.”

He spoke commandingly, as if fraternal love had transformed the gentle, timid youth into a resolute man. Lettice, wondering and bewildered, mechanically obeyed. She came to Lord Gowrie, who, with the disordered aspect of one who has wasted the night in misery, not sleep, lay on the floor of what had been the boys’ play-room. To all her entreaties he only turned his face to the wall and answered not. At last his brother beckoned Lettice away.

Looking at Patrick, the girl marvelled. All his impassive coldness seemed to have melted from him.



His stature appeared to rise into dignity, and there was a nobility in his face that made it beautiful to see. Lettice beheld in him, for the first time, the likeness of what she knew he would one day become—a grand, true man; the man before whom a woman's heart would instinctively bow down in Eve-like submission, murmuring—"I have found thee, my greater self—my head, my sustainer, and guide."

Patrick stood silent awhile, sometimes reading her face, sometimes casting his eyes downward, as it were struggling with inward pain. At last he said solemnly, "Lettice, this is no time for idle scruple. I know all that took place yesterday. I know, too, that there is one only chance, or William is lost. Is your will so firm that it cannot change? Must he die through loving you—my dear, my noble brother, whom I would give my poor life to save? Lettice, in this great strait I entreat you—even I;"—and he shuddered visibly—"Consider what you do. It is an awful thing to have life and death in your hands. I beseech you, let him love you, and be happy."

Lettice listened. As he spoke, slowly—slowly—the young rich blood faded from her face; she became rigid, white, and cold; all the life left was in her eyes, and they were fixed on Patrick, as it were the last look of one dying.

"Answer me," she said with a measured, toneless voice—"answer truly, on your soul. Do *you* desire this of me? Is it *your* wish that I should become your brother's wife?"

"My wish—my wish?" he muttered, and then his reply came clear and distinct as one says the words which fix the sentence of a lifetime, "In the sight of God, yes!"

Lettice gave him her hand, and he led her again to his brother.

"I need not stay," he whispered: "you, Lettice, will say all—better say it at once."

She looked at Patrick with a bewildered, uncertain air, and then began to speak.

"Lord Gowrie, that is, William, I——"

She said no more, but fell down at Patrick's feet in a death-like swoon.

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Lettice lay insensible for many hours. For her there were no farewells—when she awoke the two brothers were gone. She found on her neck a golden chain, and on her finger a ring, the only tokens of the last passionate embraces which William had lavished on her whom he now considered his betrothed. But she herself remembered nothing. And when they told her, she flung away the ring and chain, and prayed Heaven that she might die before ever Lord Gowrie came to claim her vows.

Of the younger Ruthven, she could learn nothing either from her bewildered father or her old nurse, except that Patrick had forcibly torn his brother away. He had not spoken, save leaving a kind farewell to *his sister*.

In the twilight Lettice rose from her bed. She could not, for any inward misery, neglect her good father. And all her senses had been so stunned, that as yet she was scarce alive either to the present or the future. She sat almost as if nothing had happened, listening to the old man's broken talk, or idly watching the graceful smoke-wreaths of the Virginian weed that Sir Walter Raleigh had just introduced, and with which rare luxury the young knight's friendship had provided David Calderwood.

Oppressed by the sudden events which had greatly discomposed the tenor of his placid existence, the worthy doctor smoked himself to sleep. When with his slumbers Lettice's duties ceased, her bitter grief rose up. It choked her—it seemed to make the air close and fiery, so that she could not breathe. Dark and cold as the March night was, she fled out. But she kept in the thick alleys of the garden—she dared not go near the river, lest out of its cool, cool depths should rise a demon, smilingly to tempt her there.

But at length, when the moon came out from under a black cloud, Lettice thought she would approach and sit in Patrick's old seat by the side of the Cam, where in summer nights they had spent hours—she, with girlish romance, looking up at the stars, and he teaching her all concerning them in his learned fashion, for the boy was a great astronomer.

Was it a vision? that he sat there still, in his old attitude, leaning against the willow-tree, the light slanting on his upturned brow? Her first thought

was, that he had met some fearful end, and this was his apparition only. She whispered faintly "Patrick;" but he neither spoke nor moved. Then she was sure she beheld the spirit of her beloved. Her highly-wrought feelings repelled all fear, and made her take a strange joy in this communication from the unseen world.

Once more she called him by his name, adding thereto words tenderer than his living self would ever hear. Then, seeing that the moon cast his shadow on the water, the conviction that it was no spirit but his own bodily form, made her start and glow with shame. Yet when she approached he lay quite still, his eyes were closed, and she could almost have believed him dead. But he was only in a deep sleep, overpowered by such heavy exhaustion that he hardly seemed to breathe.

Lettice crept beside him. Scarce knowing what she did, she took his cold hand and pressed it to her breast. There, suddenly waking, he felt it closely clasped; and met a gaze pure and maidenly, yet full of the wildest devotion—a look such as man rarely beholds, for the deepest tenderness is ever the most secret. Scarce had Patrick seen it than it melted into Lettice's ordinary aspect; but he *had* seen it, and it was enough.

"When did you come back?" faintly asked Lettice.

"At twilight: a day's hard riding exhausted me, and I suppose I fell asleep here."

"And wherefore did you return?" Mechanical were the questions and replies, as though both spoke at random.

"Why did I return?"

"Yes—to danger. Oh, Patrick, how shall we save you? Why did you not sail with William, if he has sailed?"

"He has! There was a passage for one only—his life was the most precious—he is my elder brother, so I persuaded him to go on board; and then—I left him."

"Patrick—Patrick!" Unconsciously she looked up at him in her old childish, loving way, and her eyes were full of tears.

"Are you glad, Lettice?"

"Glad, because you have done a noble thing. But if through this you should be discovered and taken; if I—that is, we all—should lose you—Hush!" That instant her quick ear, sharpened by terror, heard down the river the sound of oars. "They are coming—those men I saw last night—they will have brought the king's warrant that I heard them speak of. It is too late. Oh, would that you at least had been saved!"

"I, and not William?" His words spoke grave reproach, but his beaming looks belied his tone.

"I think not of William now. Why did he go and leave you to perish? But I will not leave you; Patrick, I will die with you—I ——"

"Lettice!" He began to tremble violently, took her hand and looked questioningly into her eyes. There seemed a doubt suddenly furling off from his mind, so that all was light and day—ay, even though nearer every minute came the distant sounds which warned him of his danger.

“Hark! they are close upon us;” said Lettice in an agonized whisper. “They will search the house through: what must be done?”

“I know not,” answered Patrick, dreamily.

“But I know: come—come!”

She drew him cautiously into a laurel thicket close by, which, lying deep in shadow, furnished a safe hidingplace. Thinking a moment, she took off her black mantle and wrapped it over him, that his light-coloured doublet might not be seen through the boughs.

“We may escape them,” she said: “we two have hidden here many a time when we were children.”

“Ah, Lettice!” he sighed, “we were happy then! Even now, if William had not loved you”——

“Hush! they are landing; I hear their steps—keep close.” She made him kneel so that her dress might hide him, and, as fearing that his fair floating curls might catch some stray moonbeam, she put her hands upon his hair.

Footsteps came nearer and nearer—life or death was in each tread. The terrified voice of David Calderwood was heard avouching that, hours since, the Scottish brothers had fled; and still the only answer was “Search—search!”

In their agony the two young creatures—they were both so young!—drew closer to each other; and Patrick’s arms were wrapped round Lettice, as they used to be when she was a child. He whispered, “If I die, Lettice, love me. Better than life—better than aught save honour, I have loved *thee*!”

She pressed her cold lips upon his forehead, close and fond. This was the only vow which passed between them. The officers began to search the garden, David Calderwood following, wringing his feeble hands. "Good friends, gin ye seek till dawn, ye'll no find ae thing alive, save my puir bairn, if sae be she is living still. Lettice—Lettice, whar are ye gane?" cried the old man piteously.

"Go to your father—go!" murmured Patrick; but Lettice was deaf to all love save his now.

"I'll help ye to seek in ilka bush and brake, if only to find my puir lassie; and I pray our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth"—

"Our sovereign lord King James of England and Scotland; that's the prayer now—so no treason, old man," said one of the officers, giving him a buffet which made poor Davie stagger. At the sight, Patrick Ruthven started in his hidingplace.

"An owl in the bushes—Hollo there!" shouted the men.

Patrick and Lettice scarcely breathed. In her frenzy she clasped her arms passionately round his neck; her eyes, stretched out into the darkness, flashed fire; she felt that had she only a weapon at hand, she would have committed murder to save him. Vain—vain—all vain!

A crash in the bushes, a rough hand on Patrick's breast—"Ho! prisoners in the king's name!"

He was taken at last.

Whether she wept, or shrieked, or prayed, whether


they took any farewell of one another or no, Lettice never remembered. All that remained in her memory after that awful moment was one sight—a boat gliding down the river in the moonlight; and one sound, words which Patrick had contrived to whisper, “The Tower—the Tower!”

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## PART II.

ONE day, in mid-winter, when Tower Hill, so often reddened with blood, lay white under many inches of snow, a woman might have been seen taking her way over the portcullis into the Tower. She seemed to belong to the middle class; her hood and kirtle were of humble fashion, black and close. She was a small, insignificant-looking woman too, and seemed to be admitted into the awful state-prison, or rather to creep in there, attracting from the warders no more notice than a bird flying in at a captive's window, or a little bright-eyed mouse peering at him in the dark.

Her errand, she said, was to the governor's lady. Thither she was brought, through gloomy passages that seemed to make her shudder, under narrow-barred silent windows, at which she looked up with a terrified yet eager glance, as if she expected to see appear there the wan face of some wretched prisoner. She reached the governor's apartments. There air and light were not wanting, though it was in the grim old Tower. From it might be seen the shining Thames, with ships





of all nations gliding by. There were plants, too, growing in the heavy embrasures of one window, and in the other was a group of human flowers—a young mother and her beautiful children.

The stranger briefly stated her errand. She had heard that the lady desired an attendant for her daughters, and she came to offer her services, bearing credentials from one whom the governor's wife knew.

"The name is Scottish: are you from our country?" said the graceful mother, her fair face brightening with kindness.

"My father was Scots, and so were all my nearest relatives," answered the woman in a low voice, as she pulled her hood closer over her face.

"You say *was* and *were*: are all gone then?"

"Yes, madam: I am quite alone."

"Poor young thing!"

"Nay, I am not young; I am thirty-four years old."

"And you have never been married?"

"No."

"Ah!" sighed the happy young wife of twenty-five, with a sort of dignified compassion. But she was of a kindly nature, and she discerned that the stranger wore a look of great sweetness, and had withal a gentle voice—that truest index of a womanly spirit. She enrolled her in her household at once.

"And you are willing, my good—— What did you say was your Christian name?"

"Lettice."

“ You are willing to reside in the Tower ? It is at best but a dreary place for us, as well as for the poor prisoners : though, thanks to our merciful King James, we have had but few executions here lately.”

Lettice faintly shuddered—perhaps it was to hear such gentle lips speak so indifferently of these horrors—but she answered, “ I am quite satisfied, madam : even this prison seems a home to one who has just lost the only home she ever knew, and who has now none in the wide world.”

She spoke with great simplicity, and in the calm manner of a woman who has been taught patience by long suffering. Nevertheless, when the governor's lady bade her take off her mantle and hood, and the three little maidens, summoned from the inner room, came gathering round her, and, won by her sweet looks, offered childish kisses, Lettice's self-control failed, and a few tears began to fall from her eyes.

“ Nay, take heart, my countrywoman,” said the young matron kindly : “ we will make you very happy here ; and perhaps find you for husband a brave yeoman-warder with a good estate : King James takes care his Scottish subjects shall thrive in merry England.”

And quite satisfied that in a wealthy marriage she had thus promised the chief good of life, the lady departed.

That night Lettice saw the stars rise and shine—not on the limpid Cam, not on the quaint old garden where her childish feet had played, and where afterwards—all earlier memories blotted out by those of one terrible

night—she had walked patiently, bearing the burden of her sorrow for sixteen years.

Sixteen years! It was thus long since Patrick Ruthven had disappeared, and yet no tidings had ever been heard of or from him. She had exerted all energies, exhausted all schemes—so far as she dared without endangering her father's safety, or leaving him in his helpless age—but could gain no clue as to the after-fate of her lover. Whether he still languished in prison, or had been freed by escape or death, all was mystery: her only certainty was, that he had not perished on the public scaffold, otherwise, she would have known.

And so praying for him day and night, and loving him continually, this faithful woman had lived on. The days and years of her youth had glided from her like the waves of a river, uncounted, for no light of love rested on them. Their onward course she neither watched nor feared.

She saw the young men and maidens of her own age pass away into the whirl of life, marry, and gather round them a third generation, while she remained the same. Wooers she had, for when sorrow comes in early youth, and fails to crush, it sometimes leaves behind a tender charm beyond all beauty, and this made Lettice not unsought. Some women—good women, too—can love in their simple, easy-hearted fashion, twice, thrice, many times. Others pour out their whole soul in one love, and have no more left to give ever after. Lettice Calderwood was one of these.

Her father lingered many years in great bodily weakness, and in an almost fatuous old age. She tended him unweariedly until he died. Then when she had no kindred tie left in the wide world, no duty to perform, none to love, and none to obey, she formed a resolution over which she had been long brooding with an intensity of persevering will such as few women have, but which no human being ever has *except* a woman.

That resolution planned, maturely guided, carried through many hindrances, formidable indeed, but which fell like straws before the might of her great love, Lettice found herself at last an inmate of the Tower. If detained there, as in all human probability he was, unless no longer of this world, she should certainly discover Patrick Ruthven. Farther plans she saw not clear, still doubtful as she was of his very existence. But as she sat by herself in the silent midnight, within a few yards, it might be, of the spot where, if living, he still dragged on his mournful days; or where, if dead, his spirit had parted from the body, there came upon her a conviction which often clings to those whose portion is somewhat like to hers.

"He is not dead," Lettice murmured, "else he would have come to me: he knew I should not have feared. No, he is still living; and if living, I will find and save him."

So, praying for her Patrick with the woman's pale, faded lips, as the girl had prayed sixteen years before, Lettice fell asleep.

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It was a dangerous thing for the free inhabitants of the Tower to inquire too closely about the prisoners. The days of Guy Fawkes and Sir Thomas Overbury were not so long past, but that all who had any interest in the enemies of King James, knew it was wisest to keep a silent tongue and close-shut eyes. Lettice Calderwood had dwelt for weeks within the walls where perchance lay her never-forgotten lover, and yet she had neither heard nor spoken the name of Patrick Ruthven.

Her whole time was spent with the governor's children. They, happy creatures, played merrily outside the cells wherein was concealed misery and despair. Sometimes they talked about "the prisoners" with a light unconsciousness, as if speaking of cattle, or things inanimate. Poor little ones! how could they understand the meaning of the word!

"Do you ever see the—the *prisoners*?" Lettice ventured to ask of them one day.

"Oh, yes; a few are allowed to walk on the leads, and then we peep at them from below. We are very good friends with one or two—our father says we may."

"What are their names, my child?" If the little girl could have known the strong convulsion that passed over Lettice's heart while she put this simple question!

"We don't call them anything: they are only prisoners. They have been here a great many years, I believe. One lives there, in the Beauchamp Tower:

he is always writing; and when we go in to see him, for he likes us to come, he does nothing but puff, puff, puff!" And the laughing child put her finger in her mouth, and began mimicking a smoker to perfection.

"Mabel," said the elder sister, "you should not laugh at him, for our father says he is a good man, and the king is not very angry with him, any more than with the other man who is shut up in the Bell Tower. You should see him, Mrs. Lettice; he is my favourite, because he is so gentle. They say he walks on the leads between his room and the Beauchamp Tower, night after night, watching the stars; and he plays with us children, and gets us to bring him quantities of flowers, out of which he makes such wonderful medicines. He cured Mabel of the chincough, and father of the ague, and——"

"Hush, Grace; Mistress Lettice is quite tired with your chatter. See how white she looks!"

"No; go on, my darlings; talk as much as you will," murmured Lettice; and rousing herself, she contrived to learn from them what this prisoner was like.

A little, bent man—very old the children thought, because his hair was quite gray, except a few locks behind that were just the colour of Grace's. Lettice, holding the child on her knee, had often secretly kissed the soft fair curls; she did so now with passionate tenderness. Yet could it indeed be Patrick—so changed! The thing seemed scarcely possible.

Next time the children went to see this prisoner, she hid herself, where, from below, she could watch the leads on which he was accustomed to walk. There appeared the figure of a man, moving with the heavy, stooping, lounging gait of long captivity. Could it be that Patrick's youth had been crushed into such a pitiable semblance as this? He came and leaned on the breastwork or boundary of his narrow walk. In the distance the features were indistinct; but something in the wavy falling of the hair reminded her of Patrick. She half uttered a cry of recognition, suppressed it, sank back, and wept. His name—if she could only learn the captive's name! But there was great mystery kept about that. The children said, "he had none, he had been in the Tower so many years." Grace added, that she had once asked him, and he answered "that he had almost forgotten it." Alas, poor soul!

One day Lettice, impelled by a wild hope, fastened in Grace's dress a little childish ornament that she herself had used to wear: it had been broken, and the boy Patrick's rude workmanship in the repairing was on it still. If this man were indeed Patrick, it might catch his eye, and bring back to his dulled memory the days of his youth.

The "prisoner" noticed, and touched the brooch, Grace said; observed that it was pretty; that he thought he had once seen one like it, he could not tell where; and then his dull mood came over him, and he would not talk any more.

Lettice's eager hope sank; but on it she lived yet longer; and day by day she watched tearfully the poor captive, who, if not Patrick, had suffered Patrick's doom.

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The child Grace fell sick. Lettice grieved, for she loved the little girl; but this trouble seemed helping to work out her one great aim of life. Then, at least, she might hear more of the prisoner whose skill in medicine had won the deep gratitude of both the governor and his lady. But Grace improved, and still of the invisible physician nothing was disclosed. At length one night, when the anxious mother and Lettice were watching the child, together and alone, there arose an emergency.

"The potion will be needed at dawn; 'tis near midnight, and I have not sent to—to the Bell Tower," said the mother. "What must be done? Who can I trust?" She looked at Lettice, whom she and all the household had already learned to love—"I will trust you."

She explained briefly that the child's physician was a state prisoner, who had acquired his skill during sixteen years' captivity; that his durance was now greatly softened by the king's order; but that still, except the governor's family, he was allowed to see no one, nor to hold any communication with the outer world. "And," said the lady, "if I send you to him,



you must keep silence on all concerning him, for he and his have been greatly hated by King James; and no marvel. He is Patrick, the last of the Ruthvens."

What dizzy, tumultuous joy rushed to the heart of the faithful woman, who, after long-silent years, again heard the music of that name! But she stood still and mute, and gave no sign.

"Lettice, will you go?"

"I will:" and she went.

There was not a foot heard, not a breath stirring, in the grim old Tower. As, bearing the ponderous keys, she unfastened door after door, the sound of the opening locks was startling and awful. At the foot of the Bell Tower Lettice paused. Sixteen years seemed all swept away; her heart throbbed, and her pale brow of middle age flushed like a young girl's. Would he know her? Would she not appal him, standing suddenly, like a spectre, by his side? She pulled her hood over her face, and resolved to feign her voice, lest the shock might overpower his strength. Thinking of his emotion, she soon calmed her own, and came with firm step to the outer door. There gleamed a faint ray through some worm-eaten fissure; the governor's wife had told her that he always studied until late in the night. Lettice pictured him as at the old home at Cambridge, as in perpetual youth he dwelt ever in her memory. She saw him, leaning over his books, with his pale boyish features, his fair curls, his dreamy-lidded eyes. She opened the door, and

saw—a gray-headed man, withered and bent, quaint and careless in dress, writing by lamp-light. He momentarily raised his head; the face had a strange, old world look, mingled with an aspect half vacancy, half abstraction. Lettice shrank aghast. It seemed as if the former Patrick were dead, and this a phantom risen up to mock her. But when he spoke, it was his own true voice.

“Ah, you come for the child Grace’s potion?” said he. “’Tis all prepared; wait a moment—listen!”

He rose, put the medicine into her hand, and proceeded to give various directions concerning it. Then he sat down again, and prepared to resume his reading. Lettice stood silent; that he did not recognize her she plainly saw, yet this was what she had desired. Why should she feel pain?

She put back her hood, and approached him—  
“Master Patrick Ruthven!”

He started, but it could only be to hear the long unused Christian name; for looking up at her face, now turned fully on him, *his* expressed blank unconsciousness. He did not know her!

“Madam, pardon me; I have not seen you before, but I suppose you come from little Grace. If I have omitted anything, or forgotten— One forgets everything here.”

Lettice groaned.

The poor captive looked disturbed, bewildered; restlessly he moved his papers about, and she saw his

hands, long, white, and woman-like, whose delicacy William used to mock, and Lettice to admire; the same hands she had clasped and kissed in her last frenzied agony of parting. She did so now.

"Patrick, Patrick; have you forgotten me—even me?"

He looked at her again, and shook his head. "I have seen you somewhere I think, perhaps in the old time before I came hither; but my memory is poor, very poor. What is your name?"

"Lettice!"

A light came into his face for a moment, and faded. "It is a sweet name. I used to love it once I believe; some one I knew bore it; but, as I said, I forget so many things now. Lettice, Lettice!" He repeated the name, as if trying to call back images of a long-past life.

Lettice's first horror passed. She discerned all now—she saw what he had become: how, shut up from youth to manhood in that fearful prison, his life had withered there; how, as the slow vacant years crawled by, passion, affection, feeling of every kind, had grown dull. Wreck as he was—the wreck captivity had made him—her never-dying love encompassed him still.

"Patrick," she said gently, though her tears were flowing fast, "look at me, and try to think of the past—my father who taught you when you were a boy: and I, Lettice Calderwood, who used to be your play-fellow; the old house at Cambridge—the river-bank

where you liked to sit—the garden and the laurel-trees.

His features began to quiver.

“It is dim, very dim; but I think I do remember all this, ay, and you, Lettice! I am glad to see you once more.”

He trembled a good deal, and looked at her many times, as though, in comparing his old recollection of her with her present likeness, the difference puzzled him.

Lettice said, faintly smiling, “You know I am old now—one changes much in sixteen years.” But the smile brought back somewhat of her former self, and Patrick’s mind seemed to grow clearer.

“I think,” he said with a mournful simplicity, “I think I must have loved you once. I never forgot you even here, until”—and he shuddered—“until they put me into that dark, damp cell, where I heard no sound and saw no living face, for I know not how long; I forgot everything then.”

Lettice’s heart was bursting; she pressed his hands to her breast, and sobbed aloud. At first he seemed troubled by her emotion, and then, as if unable to resist, his own gray hair drooped on Lettice’s shoulder, and the poor prisoner also wept. By slow degrees Patrick’s memory wakened to the things of the past and of the living world; but they seemed to touch him little. He heard of David Calderwood’s death with a quiet sigh—all keen sense of human pain being apparently obliterated from his mind. After a pause he

asked, though still indifferently, "There was my brother too—tell me something of William?"

"William acted nobly, and so acting, ceased to be unhappy!" said Lettice in a confused voice.

"Unhappy!" repeated the captive vacantly. "Ah, yes; I had forgotten: we had much sorrow in our youth—he, and you, and I"—

"Hush, Patrick! we will not speak of that. I wrote to William, and told him all: he freed me from my promises. Time brought him comfort: he remained abroad, married, and last year—grieve not, Patrick, for while living he had great happiness—last year he died."

"Poor William dead!—my last brother dead!" Patrick said thoughtfully; and sat a long time wistfully gazing in the air, now and then uttering broken words, which showed his mind was recalling incidents of their boyish days. At last he said, "And you, Lettice—what of yourself?"

"I am as you left me—poor Lettice Calderwood; in nothing changed but years." She murmured this with her eyes cast down, as if she had need to be ashamed that she had felt a woman's one, pure love; that for it she had given up all sweetnesses of wifhood and motherhood, and stood there in her faded bloom, speaking no word, but letting her whole life's story speak for her: "See how faithful I have been to *thee*!"

Perhaps, as Patrick looked on her, some sense of the greatness of this love, so strong in its oneness, so

patient in its endurance, dawned upon his bewildered and long paralysed senses. He stretched out his arms to her, crying, "I am unworthy—most unworthy! But Lettice, love me still: help me—take care of me: do not leave me again!"

He had forgotten, and she too, all worldly things. Waking from that dream, they found that she was only humble Lettice Calderwood, and he a prisoner in the Tower. No matter—one at least had ceased to fear. When a woman once feels that all depends upon the strength of her love—that the power to will and to act of necessity lies in her hands—she gains a courage which nothing can daunt or quell. And as Lettice bade Patrick Ruthven farewell, whispering hope and tenderness which his long-dulled ears would scarcely receive, she felt certain that she should set her beloved free; ay, as certain as though she stood at the head of armies to hurl King James from his throne.

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Little Grace recovered; and unto the mother's heart, still trembling with its recent joy, another heart was led to open itself, with all its burden of many years. One day, when both their spirits were attuned to confidence, Lettice told the governor's wife her whole story. It was a story that would have melted many a one to sympathy: the young Scottish gentlewoman listened even with tears. Ruthven was her countryman, and she had shown him kindness ever since her husband was made governor; he was her child's preserver, and she deter-

mined to try all efforts to obtain his liberty. She exerted secret influence at court, at first with hope of success; but that year the bugbear treason was loudly dinned into the pusillanimous monarch's ears, and Tower Hill was again watered with its red rain.

One day the little Grace and Mabel loudly lamented that they were forbidden any longer to visit their friend in the Beauchamp Tower. On the next, Lettice and Patrick, walking on the leads (where she had liberty to visit him now), saw the black procession winding past, and heard distantly the heavy sound of the axe's fall. Patrick said "There dies a just man and a guiltless, and one that Davie Calderwood would have deeply mourned. God receive the soul of Walter Raleigh!"

He spoke calmly, as if such sights had ceased to move him; but Lettice crouched down, hiding her face in inexpressible horror. When they re-entered his narrow prison, she clasped her arms wildly round her betrothed—for they had plighted their troth to one another, whether it were for life or death. She felt that to have him safe, with freedom to see him, to love and comfort him, was blessedness even here.

And so, for a whole year, through fear lest the king's anger should be roused, nothing more was done toward effecting Ruthven's release.

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When once a generous purpose roots itself in a leal Scottish heart, especially a woman's, it is not easy to uproot it thence. The governor's wife came to Lettice

one day, and told her that there was hope; since Queen Anne was dead, and the king could now fear no treason from the Ruthven line. She applied to the court, and answer came that Patrick Ruthven should be set at liberty, if some near friend would solicit his pardon.

“A form—a mere form—only desired to soothe King James’s pride,” said the plain-speaking Scottish lady: she came from the bold race of Kirkaldy of Grange.

But, form as it was, when Lettice told her lover the tidings, he shook his head in his listless way, and said it could never be.

“I have no friend in the wide world to plead for me, or to crave my pardon: all my kith and kin have died; I am left the last of my race. No, Lettice, it is best as it is! Perchance I would have liked to go once more to the meadows by the Cam where the rare flowers grow; and it would have been a sweet and thankful duty to exercise my skill in healing on the poor and needy. But let be—let be! Do not talk of worldly liberty; we will go and look at the free, free stars that roam, night after night, over this prison, and never tire! Come, my faithful Lettice—come!”

But Lettice groaned in spirit. He, long used to captivity, scarce felt the chain; she, for his sake, writhed under it like a double weight.

“Patrick,” she said, leaning by him, and with him watching the few dull lights that were scattered throughout the black city which lay below, while a yellow mist rising from the river, gathered over everything, palely and cold—“My Patrick, would it not be



happy to go far away from here into your own clear northern air? Look!"—and she pointed to the barren osier-flats through which the Thames winds seaward—"if instead of that dull line were the mountains you told me of when we were children, rising, height after height, like a good man's life, which grows year by year nearer to heaven, until it melts, cloudlike, into heaven itself at last."

The prisoner sighed, and looked on the blank landscape with glistening eyes that saw—not it, but some dim view beyond.

Lettice continued: "Ay, and if we were free—both free—if we could hide ourselves in some sweet spot, and live our old childlike life!"

He answered restlessly—"Do not talk of this, or else I shall die of longing; and I had grown so resigned, so content with my books and my herbs. Why did you bring me back to the bitter world?"

"To save thee, my beloved!" she answered soothingly. "To take thee out of prison, and bring thee back the dew of thy youth. Shall it not be so?"

"How can it, when there is no one who has a right to intreat for my pardon? I have no kindred, no tie in the wide world!"

"Save one."

"Ah, true!—forgive me, my faithful love! But what can *you* do?"

Lettice hid her face on his shoulder. If she blushed it was not with shame, for she knew her own pure heart, and Heaven knew it too. She rose, and spoke in

a quiet, womanly tone, though somewhat trembling the while.

“Patrick, we are neither of us young; all love we bear each other is stilled into the affection that must always exist between two who, having wasted half a life-time in sorrow, hope to spend the poor remainder together and in peace. You will not misjudge what I am going to say?”

“No—no,” answered Ruthven in his absent manner.

“There is but one way to obtain your freedom. Dearest, long-lost and found, let *your wife* go and plead for you before the king!”

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The young kinswoman of Kirkaldy of Grange had a rebellious yearning, though she was a governor's lady. She liked to cheat King James of his captives when it could be done with safety. Secretly, in order to avoid all risk to her husband, she introduced a Scottish minister to the dismal chambers of the Bell Tower. There, in that dull prison-house, was celebrated a marriage. Brief it was, and grave: without smiles, without tears. Yet not without love, for they did indeed love one another, those two who, as girl and boy, had clung together so wildly in the garden by the Cam. But their love was not like that of youth: it was deep, solemn, still.

When the marriage was performed, Patrick said, in his dreamy way,—

“Is it all done? Am I thy husband, Lettice?”

She answered, "Yes."

"A hard task for thee to fulfil; a weary life to lead! But art thou content?"

She answered, "I am content." And taking his hand, held it fast in that which would now guide him through life.

"Nay, have no fear, friends," cheeringly said the brave Scottish lady who had aided them so much. "King James is feeble-hearted, and he has heard the people's outcry against Raleigh's twelve years' imprisonment, sealed at last with blood. He dare not do the like again. Lettice, take comfort; you will soon have your husband free."

Her *husband*! She heard the word—she who had never dreamed of any other life than one of loneliness, over which hung the pale shadow of that early-lost love. Her heart melted under the sense of its great content, and she wept as softly and joyfully as though she had been a young bride.

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"Will his Majesty appear to day, my Lord of Buckingham?" said one of the Scottish attendants of the palace at Whitehall, meeting the twin stars of James's court—"Steenie," and "Baby Charles."

"Wherefore, good Ferguson?"

"Because, my lord, there is a person here craving audience, who has been recommended to me by a countrywoman of my own."

"A woman is it? My prince, let us see!"

The woman rose up and curtsied beneath the gaze of royalty and nobility ; but she had nothing in her to attract or retain either. She was pale, low-statured, and of middle age. " Steenie " gave her a mock salutation ; Prince Charles, ever chivalrous to women, acknowledged her lowly reverence with his dignified, half-melancholy, Stuart smile, and the two youths passed out.

" The king is coming, Mistress Ruthven ; now is your time ! " whispered young Allan Ferguson.

He entered—the poor feeble pedant, to whom had dwindled down the ancient line of Scotland's kings. Surrounding him were the great and noble of the day : Gondomar, the gay Spanish ambassador ; the Lord-Chancellor Bacon ; all the choicest of the English nobility left after the death-sweeping reigns of Mary and Elizabeth ; and those of the king's own country whom his conciliatory rule had detached from various factions, to join in fidelity to the one branch of the Stuart family now remaining.

" Hech, sirs, wha's here ? " James cried in his sharp, quavering voice, through which rang the good humour produced by a satisfactory arrangement with Spain, completed that same hour. " Petitioning, my bonnie woman ? Aweel, then say your say ! "

Lettice told her story in words so broken that they would scarce have been understood save for the earnestness of her eyes. It was a story touching and interesting even to James and his frivolous court. To them it sounded new and curious to hear of a woman who had

loved and suffered, waited and hoped, and gone through all trial for *one* man's sake, for seventeen years. And it so chanced that their possible mockery of her long maiden life was prevented by Lettice always unconsciously saying "my husband," as the governor's wife had charged her to say, instead of mentioning at once the hated name of Ruthven.

James looked discomposed. "My lords, a king maun do as he wills; ye a' ken the chapters in my 'Basilicon Doron' respecting free monarchies, and the right or prerogative of rulers. But I wadna keep an innocent man—mind ye, an *innocent* man—in prison for saxteen—did she no say saxteen years? Woman, wha may ye be? and why dinna ye tell your husband's name?"

"It is a name—the bearing of which was the only wrong he ever did your majesty: I am the wife of Patrick Ruthven!"

James turned pale, as he ever did at the sound of that dreaded name. He never forgot that it was a Ruthven who acted in that scene of blood which impressed cowardice on the nature of the yet unborn babe: he never forgot the actors in the Gowrie plot, who, for a brief space, caused him, a king by birth and right, to be tied and bound like a felon.

He frowned, and looked round on his courtiers, who kept a discreet silence. Then he said with a pedantic air, "Woman, I will hear thee again on this matter," and passed into the audience-chamber.

Lettice's heart grew cold. It was a horrible thing to reflect that life or death lay on the fiat of that poor

vain, fickle king. No! On the fiat of a King far higher, whose government comprises not kingdoms, but worlds. Kneeling where she had knelt to King James, she knelt to Him, and prayed.

There came, crossing the empty chamber, one of the nobles who had formed one of the monarch's train. He was an old man, tall and pale. His demeanour savoured more of the courtly grace of Elizabeth's reign than the foppish gallantry of James's. He announced his name at once.

"Mistress Ruthven, I am the Earl of Hertford."

She had heard it in the Tower. It had been long chronicled there as a portion of that mournful story of the Lady Catharine Grey, sister to Queen Jane, who marrying Hertford without Elizabeth's consent, had been imprisoned until her young life's close.

He was an old man now, but something in Lettice's story had touched him with the days of his youth. He came to say that he would plead her cause with the king, and that he thought she had good reason to hope.

"And you have been parted ever since your marriage—seventeen years?"

"We are but newly married, my lord; our bridal was in the Tower," said Lettice, who never said aught but truth.

"Ah! no need to tell the king that: yet it makes a sadder tale still. Where abides your husband in the Tower?"

"In the Bell Tower—a narrow, dreary spot."

“ I know—I know ! ” He turned away, perhaps remembering the poor young mother who had there, in that very Bell Tower, given birth to his two brave sons. He, too, had felt the bitterness of captivity ; and as he departed from Lettice, having given her both council and cheer, she heard the old nobleman muttering to himself, “ Seventeen years !—seventeen years ! ”

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Patrick Ruthven sat in his tower poring over his wealth of books. An August sunbeam quivering in, rested on a bunch of dried flowers, which the herbalist was examining with great earnestness. He scarce lifted up his head when the light footstep warned him of his wife’s entrance.

“ Lettice,” he said, “ *eureka* !—( ‘ I have found it ! ’ ) This plant must be the veritable hemlock of the ancients—the potion which gave Socrates death. Compare the description—see.”

He looked at her ; she was trembling all over with joy.

“ My husband,” she said breathlessly, “ leave these books ; come and gaze out in the clear morning air ; how fresh it is ; how free—free—free ! ”

She repeated the word, that the tidings might dawn upon him slowly, not too bewilderingly. She drew him out upon the prison leads, and bade him look northwards, where in the distant uplands beyond Holborn, the ripening wheat-fields shone, wave upon wave, like yellow seas.

“ Think, Patrick, to go thither ; to sit down under

the sheaves like little children, as we used to do; to hear the trees rustling, and see the swallows fly; and then to go home—to a quiet safe cottage home. Oh, Patrick, my husband, you are free!”

“I am free!” He, the prisoner for seventeen years, neither fell down in a swoon of transport, nor wept, nor grew wild with ecstasy. He only uttered the words in a monotonous, incredulous tone—“I am free!” His wife embraced him with passionate joy; he kissed her, stroked her yet fair cheek—fairer still since she had once more known peace—and then went slowly back into his dark room.

There he sat motionless, while Lettice busied herself in putting together the books and scientific matters which had gradually accumulated round the captive. Then she brought him attire suitable for a man of middle rank at that period.

“You must not wear this out in the world, my Patrick,” said the wife, touching his threadbare robe of a fashion many years back.

“Must I not?” and he contemplated the dress, which seemed to him gaudy and strange. “Lettice,” he murmured, “I am afraid—is the world so changed? Must I give up my old ways?”

But she soothed him with cheerful words, and made ready for his departure. Ere they quitted the Bell Tower, he went into the little closet which had been his bedchamber, and, kneeling down, thanked God, and prayed for all captives a deliverance like his own. As he rose, there peeped at him a bright-eyed mouse.



“ Poor fellow-prisoner, whom I have fed so many years, who will feed thee now ? ” And breaking off some food, he called the little creature to his hand, and gave it its last meal.

Then, leaning on his wife’s arm, for he trembled, and seemed feeble as a child, Patrick Ruthven left the Tower. He had entered it a youth of nineteen ; he quitted it a worn-out, prematurely old man of thirty-six. The prime and glory of manhood had been wasted in that gloomy prison. Thank God, there is no such doom for *innocence* now !

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Far past what then was London’s utmost verge, Lettice Ruthven led her husband. He walked through the streets like one in a dream : all sounds stunned—all sights bewildered him. If a chance eye noticed his somewhat quaint aspect, he clung to Lettice with terror, lest he should again be taken prisoner. She told him there was no fear, that through Lord Hertford’s solicitation and the mediation of Prince Charles, the king had granted him a free pardon ; nay, the young Prince, ever kind-hearted, had settled on him a pension for life. All this he heard as if he heard it not. Nothing soothed him but Lettice’s calm smile.

They came to the place which she had chosen as their first abode. It was a farm-house, planted on one of the hills to the north of London. Above was a great wide heath ; below, numberless little undulating valleys, with trees and meadows, harvest-fields and

streams. There, after sunset, they took their evening walk. He, long used to the close air of the prison, shivered even at the warm summer wind; and his feeble limbs, accustomed to pace their narrow round, could scarcely endure fatigue. But Lettice wrapped him warm, and took him to a soft-wooded bank with a stream running below. There he lay, his head on her lap, listening to the ripple of the water.

He had never heard that sound since he was a boy sitting beside the Cam, on the night his brother sailed from Harwich. Though his memory was dull yet, and he rarely spoke of the past, perhaps he thought of it now, for the tears crept through his shut eyes, and he whispered—"Lettice, you are sure, quite sure, that afterwards William was happy?"

She told him again and again that it was indeed so. She did not tell him how—though William grew renowned abroad—he never sent for tidings of his imprisoned brother. She would not pain the fraternal love which had kept its faith through life so close and true.

"And, Patrick, are you happy?"

He answered "Yes!" softly, like a drowsy child. His wife leaned over him, and her hand fell on his hair, once so beautiful, now quite gray. Something of protection was there in her love for him; the mingling of reverence and tender care, due alike to his great mental power and his almost infantile simplicity in worldly things. All he had, she honoured with her whole soul; all he had not, she, possessing, made his own.

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She was a fit wife for him. And so, in this deep content and peace, the sun set upon Patrick Ruthven's last day of captivity.

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PART III.

A HOUSE, simple, yet not mean, facing the river-side at Chelsea; its upper storeys fanned by that line of majestic trees which you, reader, may still stroll under; and if you are of dreamy mood, I know of no sweeter spot than Cheyne Walk in the moonlight; the river lying silvery and calm; the tall trees rustling among their branches; telling tales of the quaint old mansions they overshadow. But the house of which we were speaking was far humbler than these. Its occupants had chosen it more for the sake of the trees and the river than for any interior show. They lived retired; and when, as now, the master re-entered his own door, he was not met by a troop of domestics, but by one little, old, gentle-looking woman—his wife.

Twenty more years had passed over the head of Lettice Ruthven, yet something of its ancient airiness was in her footstep still; and in her eyes shone the same loving light, for it was kindled at an altar where the fire was never suffered to decay.

“You are late to-night, Patrick?” said she.

“Ay, I have been all through the meadows at Chiswick, in search of herbs for a poor lad down there who is stricken with ague. I stayed late gathering them,

and there came by a couple of Roundheads, who hooted at me for a wizard hunting for charmed plants in the moonlight. Ah, me! do I look such a weird creature, Lettice?" asked the old man in a piteous, humble tone.

He certainly had an out-of-the-world aspect, in his long white beard and hair, and his black serge gown, which he wore to indicate his character as physician. And there was a passive gentleness in his voice, which showed how little able he was to assert his own dignity, or to fight his own battles with the hard world. Well for him that neither had been needed; that for twenty years his life had flowed in a quiet stream, he growing continually more absorbed in his favourite studies, and leaving all mundane matters to his faithful helpmate. She did not usually trouble him with any of these latter, but on this day she seemed longing to talk of something else besides the additions he was making to the "Middlesex Flora," or the wonderful cures he had wrought with simples until then unknown; or, what he carefully kept to his wife's ears alone, his discoveries in those abstruse and occult sciences, the love of which seemed inherent in the Ruthven blood.

"I have found it out," he said; "the parchment charm worn by my brother, the Earl John. All these years I have kept it, and never deciphered it until now. It will bring to us and all our children great prosperity."

"All our children!" repeated Lettice mournfully. She looked at a corner of the room where hung, each

in its never-changed place, a boy's plumed hat, and beside it a heap of well-worn childish books, mementos of two little sons, who had been sent and taken away, leaving the hearth desolate.

"Ah, I forgot!" said the other with a light sigh. "Bravely did Aleck read his Greek Galen; and as for poor wee Willie, he knew every plant in Battersea Fields. Well might the gossips mock at me, saying, 'Physician, save thyself!' or, rather, thy {two better selves. But I could not. I am aye good for little, very little."

His wife took his hand affectionately, and said, smiling through her tears—"Nay, there is many a one hereabouts who lifts his hat when Dr. Ruthven passes by. If the vulgar mock, the learned honour thee, my husband. And Patrick," she murmured, with her sweet voice of calm, which hid all sorrow from *him*, "though our two boys are with God, He has left us our Marie: I saw her to-day."

"Did she come hither?"

"No, she cannot easily leave the Queen's household you know. But she bade me meet her at a friend's," and a faint expression of pain crossed the mother's face. "Perhaps she was right; I am scarce fit to mingle with court ladies, as Marie does; and Marie is growing as beautiful and as stately as any of them all."

"Is she?" said Dr. Ruthven absently. He had never felt the same affection for his daughter as he had done for his two lost sons. Marie had in early youth been separated from her family, and taken under the

care of the wife of the lieutenant of the Tower—now become a countess, and in high favour in the Queen's household. Through her means the little girl was afterwards adopted by Henrietta Maria, to be educated at court, and raised to the position due to the last daughter of the direct Ruthven line.

"She had tidings for me, Patrick—tidings that may well make a mother's heart both tremble and rejoice. The Queen wishes to dispose of our daughter in marriage."

Ruthven lifted his eyes, dropped them, and then became intent upon a handful of flowers which he had drawn from the great coarse bag he always carried in his rambles. It was evident he took little interest in the news which had so agitated the mother.

"Do you not wish to know who it is that will wed our Marie—ay, and at once—for all is fixed?"

"I hope it may be some good man. Young women usually marry—I am glad she should do so: but you know, Lettice, I am a quiet, dreamy, old philosopher; I have forgotten all such things."

So spoke, after nearly forty years, the boyish lover who had once sat mournfully by the side of the Cam. But this life is an eternal progression. Young, passionate love must of necessity change its forms. Yet what matters that, if its essence remains the same? Lettice, a wife for many years, keeping in her heart still something of its fresh, womanly romance, neither murmured nor felt pain that with her husband the noon-day of love had gradually dwindled into evening-tide. And

as with her, so should it be with all. Never should a maiden promise her troth, never should a bride stand at the altar, unless she can look calmly forward to the time when all romance melts into reality; when youth and passion cease, and even long-assured affection from its very certainty at times grows tame. Never ought a woman to take the marriage-vow unless she can bear to think fearlessly of the time when she will sit an old wife by her old husband's side, while her only influence over him, her only comfort for herself, lies in the strength of that devotion which, saying not alone in words but in constant deeds—"I love thee!" desires and exacts no more.

This picture was Lettice Ruthven in her old age.

She might have sighed to hear Patrick speak so forgetfully of those things which she with great tenderness remembered still—for women cling longer than men to the love-days of their youth—but she never thought of bringing the brightness of that olden dream to contrast painfully with their calm life now. She passed over her husband's words, and kept silence, musing on her daughter's future.

"He is a rich man, and one of great renown, this Sir Anthony Vandyck," she said at last. "Being the king's painter, he saw our Marie frequently at court: no wonder he thought her beautiful, or that he should learn to adore her, as she says he does. I wonder if she loves him?"

"Fret not thyself about that, goodwife, but come and tie up this bundle of herbs for me. There, hang

it on the wall, and then sit by me with thy knitting-pins, which I like to watch until I go to sleep. I am so weary, Lettice."

She arranged the cushion under his head: he looked quite old now, far more so than she, though they were nearly equal in years. But he had never recovered the long imprisonment which had dried up all the springs of life. Lettice watched him as he slept—his pale, withered face, his thin hands—and her undying tenderness enfolded him yet. Dearly she had cherished her three children—the two dead boys, the daughter now her sole pride—but this one great love was beyond them all.

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Marie Ruthven was one of the beauties of that court, which, whatever its political errors might have been, was then in its inner circle as brilliant as any which England had known. A monarch generous, accomplished, devoted to the arts—a queen, against whom the greatest crime ever alleged was that she exercised undue influence over her husband by means of the warm attachment which she had inspired and returned—a royal circle whose domestic purity knew no stain—these evidences show that, however his political conduct may condemn Charles the king, his domestic life leaves no blot upon the memory of the unfortunate Charles Stuart. Of this court, now gay as if no tempest were near to overthrow it, the chief



topic was the marriage of Sir Anthony Vandyck and the Lady Marie Ruthven. The King honoured the bridegroom—the Queen loved the bride. There were great preparations, banquets, and balls. No one ever thought of the old father and mother dwelling in the little house at Chelsea.

But one heart, though sorely stung, yearned over the forgetful daughter. When the beautiful Marie was being attired for her bridal, it was told her that some one wished to see the bride.

“A little old woman, dressed like a Puritan forsooth!” said the gay waiting-maid.

And creeping in, dazzled by the splendour of the court-dames, who were grouped around the bridal toilet, the mother came to her only daughter’s side.

The stately bride uttered no disrespectful disclaimer, for she was a Ruthven; and in ceasing to honour her parents, she would have been disowning her ancient race. But the red flush darkened her brow, and the kiss she gave her mother was forced and cold.

“Marie, my child,” murmured Lettice, “why did you not tell me your bridal was to-day? I would not have intruded there—alas! not I. But I would fain have come a little while beforehand to talk with thee, and bless thee, my own, my only child!”

Marie looked round—the apartment was deserted; she fancied she heard the retreating mockery of her companions and her maids. She said sharply—

“Mother, I meant you no wrong; but the life I lead is so different to yours and my father’s: when you

gave me up at the Queen's request, it changed all things between us. Therefore, since I knew it would not suit either, I did not invite my parents to my marriage."

"No, no, of course," said the poor mother humbly. She had long looked upon her daughter as quite a different being from herself—a creature in whom the noble Ruthven race, crushed throughout one hapless generation, was again revived. She scarce could believe that the beautiful, majestic woman she now beheld, was the pining babe whom she had nursed in the hill-cottage, where Patrick after his long captivity had slowly returned to his own right self, so as to be fit for intercourse with the world. Yet something like a sense of pride came over her when she thought that, but for the love of poor Lettice Calderwood, the last of the Ruthvens might have perished in his prison. It seemed enough glory to have been Patrick's deliverer—the mother of Patrick's beautiful child.

"And is thy bridegroom worthy of thee, my sweet Marie?" asked Lettice. "Above all, dost thou love him?"

"He is a gay and courteous gentleman," answered the bride, avoiding the question. "People say he is the most renowned artist in Europe: I think him the most graceful courtier, even though he be not very young. He dwells in state at Blackfriars, and he has a country abode at Eltham. Ah, I shall be a great lady as the wife of Sir Anthony Vandyck!"

But the question which came from the mother's

heart, "Lovest thou thy husband?" was never answered. Something jarred upon Lettice, as if the nameless division between parent and child were growing wider. How unlike was this courtly bridal to the stolen marriage in the Tower! Yet could she have seen in her daughter's heart some of the emotions which had then touched her own, she would have been more content.

"But," she murmured, "I was a poor, simple maiden always. From my youth up I never thought of anything but love. It may be different with those reared at court."

She stayed a while longer, until Marie grew restless; and then, with many tears, she embraced the bride, and gave her her blessing.

"Your father sends his too, my child," she continued. "Perhaps we would have been less grieved could we have come, as other parents do, to our daughter's wedding. But her Majesty's desire should ever guide yours; and since the Queen does not will it——"

"The Queen *does* will it," said a voice behind.

There had entered, unobserved, a lady of dignified presence, but yet on whose face was written *woman* in every line. It was Henrietta Maria.

"Marie Ruthven," she said in gentle reproof, "I meant not to overhear, but I am glad it has chanced so. You should have told me this. Madam," and she turned to Lettice, "I believed it was of your own will that you and your husband abstained from court. Let

me now say that I, a wife and mother, would never banish parents from the nuptials of their child. In the King's name and my own, I command both your presence at our solemnities."

Man can make queenships, but the sweetness of true womanhood none can give. Years after, when misery had darkened over the hapless Queen, Lettice remembered the words breathed by her now, in calm content—" *I, a wife and a mother.*" Wretched wife!—broken-hearted mother! humble Lettice Calderwood was happier than she.

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The marriage was to be celebrated in the chapel at Whitehall. There were gathered all the court, gladly following where royalty delighted to honour; as if any honours could add to those which the illustrious bridegroom already wore—the nobility of genius! As Sir Anthony Vandyck stepped forward in his dignified maturity of fame, it would be hard to say which was most honoured in this friendship—for it was indeed such—the great artist or the king.

"What wait we for, my Lord Strafford?" said Charles, as his favourite minister, Vandyck's chosen friend, advanced, by the Queen's signal, to delay the ceremony a little. Soon after, the courtly circle was joined by two strangers, the father and mother of the bride.

Patrick Ruthven had cast off the garb of the poor physician, and appeared as became his noble descent. At his side hung his long-unused sword, preserved by

one faithful woman's care ever since the day when the two young brothers had fled to Harwich. In his bearing there seemed to have momentarily revived the ancient dignity of his race; and when he had knelt to kiss the King's offered hand, he arose, lifted his white head, and looked around with a mien well be-seeming the last of the Ruthvens.

His wife was little noticed and little seen, and she scarcely wished otherwise. It was enough for her to behold her husband resuming his birthright — her daughter wedded in happiness and honour. Her loving, reverent eyes never turned from these two. Except once, when they rested on the countenance of King Charles, already shadowed with the cares of his troublous reign. She thought of the boyish prince who had passed her by in the audience-chamber at Whitehall; and her memory went back twenty years, dwelling thankfully at last in the resting-place which, as she deemed, her life had now found.

The marriage was duly celebrated; Sir Anthony bent graciously for the blessing of his wife's father; and the King, on his departure, smiled so cordially upon Patrick Ruthven, that the courtiers gathered round the poor physician, as though they would fain haste to press under the shadow of another Earl of Gowrie. But the old man's temporary firmness had passed from him: he looked wistfully round for his wife, his only strength.

"Let us go home," he said wearily; and so they went home from Whitehall to their peaceful abode at Chelsea.

Arrived there, Patrick laid aside his rich mantle and sword with an air of relief. "Ah, Lettice!" he said, as the long, cool shadows of the trees fell across the physician's garden, "dear wife, we are happier here!"

She might have dreamed loving dreams of his restoration to the honours of his house; but now she saw that that would never be. In him ambition had either never sprung up, or it had been long crushed by calamity. Besides the outward misfortunes of his lot, fate had implanted in him that easy, gentle nature, which had not the power to rise. Born an earl's son, he would die a poor physician.

Lettice was pondering over these things when a guest crossed the threshold. It was a friend of many years—the young Scottish lady who had contrived their marriage. She held high station now in the Queen's household, where, through her, Marie Ruthven had at first been brought. She yet visited occasionally the little house on Cheyne Walk. Thither, too, came at times her daughters, both peeresses by marriage, though often old Dr. Ruthven, forgetting himself, called them Grace and Mabel still.

"I have a welcome mission to-day," said the Countess; "not a formal one, it is true, but one that implies much. It is her Majesty's will that I should ask whether the Master of Ruthven—she knows enough of our Scottish usages to give him that title—whether the Master of Ruthven was pleased with his reception at court, and whether he would desire in future to be the King's good servant?"

"I am so now," answered Ruthven simply; "God knows I never plotted aught against his Majesty or his father, King James."

The lady smiled half-loftily upon the poor old man, who knew so little of worldly, and especially of courtly ways. "You understand me not, worthy doctor. This message implies that you have only to desire it, and you will be graciously offered, not perhaps your confiscated honours, but a rank equivalent. The King has already planned a peerage wherein to revive your ancient name. What say you, Lettice, will you be Lady Ruthven of Ettrick?"

"*Lord* Ruthven of Ettrick!" the wife repeated, unconsciously altering a word. She went up to her husband, and her voice trembled as she said, "Patrick, do you hear? The ancient glory may be restored, my beloved! I may live to see thee in great honour yet: shall it be so?"

"What?" he said. He had been dreamily watching the swallows skim over the river, and had not heard a syllable of what was passing.

Lettice repeated the tidings.

He shook his head restlessly: "Good wife, these dreams only weary me. What should I do as Lord Ruthven? Then I could not go out in the fields with my wallet, nor sleep at peace in the chimney-corner. No, I am happier as now."

The Countess became rather indignant. "Mistress Ruthven, urge him still; 'tis a mournful and a shameful thing that the last descendant of one of the noblest



families in Scotland should waste his life in obscurity. Bid him think of his ancestors—of the honour of his name. He may yet be Earl of Gowrie.”

Patrick Ruthven rose, and something of that dignity which so rarely appeared in him was visible now. “My Lady Countess, I am already by right Earl of Gowrie, heir to all which that poor title has brought to the Ruthven line—the heritage of blood. My father, the first Earl, perished on the scaffold; my brother John, the second, was slaughtered in his own house; my brother William, the third, died forgotten in exile; I am the last. Tell his Majesty I thank him, but I desire no title save that one which I still possess, though I never claim. What matter, since it will cease with me?” As he spoke, his eye caught the memorials of his two sons, and the old man’s voice faltered. “Ten years ago I might not have answered thus—now, I have nothing more to say.”

He rose from his seat at the window, and walked feebly across the room to the apartment set apart for his especial use. There in a few minutes they saw him, his passing emotion having subsided, sitting in his old dreamy way buried among his books.

“Are all arguments lost upon him?” said the surprised Countess. “Even you, Lettice, have you for yourself no ambition—no pride?”

“None,” she answered. “All I ever had was only for him—and for these.”

She looked first at her husband, and then at the mementos of her lost children. Though she spoke sadly,



there was great composure in her demeanour ; insomuch that the court lady, already somewhat shaken by the first rude breath of the political storm then just beginning to rise, regarded her half-enviously and sighed. Ere departing, however, she tried once more to urge her friend to come to court.

“ No,” answered Lettice ; “ Patrick said right—he is happier here ; for me, I stay with him always.”

So saying, she went back to her husband.

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Lettice Ruthven sat anxiously in her house at Chelsea. She looked considerably older, and, alas ! her face wore not the placid content which best becomes old age. It is very sad to see cares creeping on when life's declining energy requires all cherishing. Youth can endure — sometimes can grow stronger — while tossed about on life's billows ; but old age needs a quiet haven, where the chiefest happiness is *rest*.

Many cares had come upon the ancient couple at Cheyne Walk. The awful civil commotions which now shook England to its base had touched even them. Their pension had failed, and that they were in great necessity was plain from the changed appearance of the household. Its little luxuries of furniture were absent, and its bare chambers were swept and ordered by the feeble hand of the mistress alone.

When Dr. Ruthven entered, Lettice's own hands were preparing the evening meal. “ Nay, wife,” he

said restlessly, "come and sit by me and talk. Leave all else to Marjory."

"Marjory is gone," answered Mistress Ruthven, smiling. "Lettice will be henceforth your serving-woman."

She never wearied him with any domestic troubles; and he, so that he had his simple fare at the customary hour, and the house kept quiet for his evening study, rarely questioned more. He did not now.

But after a while Lettice began with a seemingly careless air, yet with evident anxiety—

"Patrick, you have not told me about your day's adventures. Have you found any patients in your wanderings?"—For the poor physician had been obliged to wander, as a peripatetic herbalist, through London streets, in order to win his daily bread.

"Patients? Oh, yes! There was a poor lad at Charing trodden on by one of the Guards' horses—it took me two hours to make fomentations for him; and there was a beggar-woman, with a child in convulsions; and a sick old gipsy near Battersea. I have expended all my herbs, and must spend two whole days in collecting more."

"But the money, dear husband," said Lettice hesitatingly. "Did any patients give money? You know, alas! we must needs ask for payment now."

"I never asked—I forgot; and I could not *sell* my herbs to those poor souls."

"No—no," answered Lettice Ruthven's kind heart. But she thought sorrowfully of the empty coffers, of

the fast-coming poverty ; not only poverty, but positive want. Against it there was no resource, for Patrick's unworldly ways made him helpless as a child. With a great pang, Lettice had induced him to try this life of a wandering physician ; but day by day, when he came in, weary and dispirited, longing for his ancient country rambles, every unconscious complaint of his stung his wife to the heart. Gladly would she even have begged for him, but it was impossible ; he would not have suffered it. And besides, humble as she herself was, Lettice never forgot that she was the wife of the Last of the Ruthvens.

" Husband," she said, compelling herself to speak to him on a subject she dreaded—" dear husband, you know we are very poor."

" Are we, Lettice ? " he answered absently.'

" I am afraid, if the pension is not paid, our money will not last for many days. Suppose I were—just to ask about the pension, you know—to go again to Marie ? "

" To *Lady Vandyck* ? " And anger gave a momentary life to the old man's dull eyes. " I thought I told you our Marie was to be henceforth dead. Call her *Lady Vandyck* only."

" I cannot, Patrick—I cannot ! Though she has been ungrateful, and though she does, as it were, shut the door on her poor old mother, still she is our Marie ; and she will be kind to us. I pray you, Patrick, let me go ! "

" No ! " he said. He, otherwise so feeble, was resolute on this one subject only. Therein was compressed his last lingering remnant of pride—the pride of a man and a father.

But in Lettice the strong yearnings of a mother's heart overcame all pride. She tried still to win her husband to consent.

"It is not that I may intreat of our daughter that bounty which we might well claim. No, Patrick; if you desire, I will ask of her nothing. But I long to see her. She is a widow now, and trouble may have changed her heart. She has a child—and not till then does one truly feel what it is to have had a mother. Do you remember how, when little Marie was born, I wept, thinking of my own mother, whom I never saw? Be sure that same Marie will now welcome me."

Ruthven made no answer to these gentle intreaties, but, after a while, relapsed into his usual quiet mood.

"I will try again to-morrow," thought Lettice, as she obeyed his signal, and came to sit beside him while he took his twilight doze. He often did so, holding one of her hands like a child.

But on the morrow he left early; and she, spending the day alone in the dull house, could not suppress her yearning to see her daughter. Some hope, too, she had that that daughter's tenderness might be re-awakened. And if Lady Vandyck did offer shelter and help to her parents in their old age, from whom might they so well receive it?

Lettice arranged her household affairs, examined her remaining store; alas, it was brief work to count the coins! She had thought to walk to Blackfriars—where, in Vandyck's former house, still abode his young widow, left widowed in less than two years

from the bridal—but her strength failed; so she took a boat, and was rowed up the Thames to her destination.

Strange was the aspect of London in those times: Westminster without a parliament; Whitehall without a king; the whole city divided against itself. Lettice took little heed of what was passing in the world outside; and as she glided along the half-deserted river, she was bewildered to see, along the streets diverging from the Thames, crowds of excited Roundheads.

“Down with the King!” shouted the boatman from his place. “Hurrah for the victory of Marston Moor!”

And Lettice trembled; for she knew that with the King’s fall must sink all her hopes of Patrick’s spending his old age in peace and undisturbed by poverty. Landing at Blackfriars, she took out her purse. It was one which, some time ago, had come filled with the bounty of the good Queen Henrietta Maria, and on it was worked a royal crown.

“Ho, ho—here are Cavaliers!” cried the man, snatching at it. “Fair madam, I take this in the name of the State.” With a satirical grimace he poured the few coins left into his pouch, and threw the empty purse to the bottom of the river.

Lettice entered her daughter’s house, knowing herself to be utterly penniless.

It was a wealthy, luxurious abode, for apparently the political convulsions of the time had not touched the peaceful follower of the arts. In its halls still hung many of Sir Anthony’s works—even some royal portraits. But the one which most charmed Lettice

was that of her own beautiful Marie—which picture remains to this day,—a token of Vandyck's admiration for his young wife, and a memorial of the wondrous beauty possessed by the last daughter of the Ruthven line. Looking on its sweet features, the mother forgot the cruel neglect which now kept her waiting a full hour in the ante-room of her own child.

There passed by a nurse carrying a babe of some twelve months old. At the sight of it, the love which nature causes to revive so strongly towards the third generation, awoke in the aged mother's heart. As yet she had never thought much of her grandchild; but now there came a great longing for this new tie, which might bind up all those that were lost or broken. The nurse was surprised to be stopped by a little old woman, trembling and in tears, who begged to see the child.

"Give it to me—into my own arms: the mother would not forbid," she said, imploringly. And close to her breast Lettice pressed her daughter's child. "What is its name?" was her question, half ashamed, poor soul! that she had to ask it.

"Justina. It was given to her the day her father died," said the Dutch nurse, somewhat pettishly. "If poor Sir Anthony could see how things are now——"

Further revelations were stopped by a message that Lady Vandyck was now visible. Lettice once more embraced her grandchild, and was ushered into her daughter's presence.

Marie was not alone: there lounged about the apartment a young man, who seemed a Puritan proselyte.

His sombre dress was jauntily worn, and his demurely-worded speech ran "trippingly on the tongue." His close-cropped hair was daintily perfumed, and his embroidered frills bespoke the Roundhead far less than the Cavalier. But Lettice Ruthven saw nought of this: she only saw her daughter. She ran eagerly to meet the gracefully-extended hand of Lady Vandyck, who looked fair and stately in her youthful matronhood.

"Wilt thou not embrace me, Marie?" said the mother, half-entreatingly.

"'Honour thy father and mother, that thy days,'" &c., &c., droned out the Puritan gentleman.

Marie stooped, and gave her mother one cold, brief kiss. A few formal inquiries she made, ever looking with a sort of timid doubt to her sanctimonious companion, whose approbation seemed to be the rule of all her actions.

The mother also regarded him with more than curiosity. "My child," she murmured, "I thought to see thee alone; but this young cavalier——"

"Nay, good madam, give me not that unholy title," answered the stranger. "I have disowned the pomps and vanities of the world, together with a baronetage two hundred years old. You now behold in me plain John Pryse, the servant of the Lord and of the Parliament: and so, ladies, I will retire. Fairest Marie, a brief adieu."

He kissed the hand of the young widow with an air anything but Puritanical, and vanished.

The mother and daughter passed an hour alone. Marie talked gaily of herself and her household; and then, as the time wore on, she seemed to grow wearied and restless. Still Lettice sat and listened, and had not strength to tell what was in her heart. Had it been but to whisper in a loving ear, "Child, thy mother has need!"—but to this woman, so stately, so wrapped up in herself, it would be like asking charity. Yet it must be done. Tremblingly she began by telling the story of her stolen purse.

"Ah, then, you will need some few coins for your journey homeward," said Lady Vandyck. She summoned an attendant, and with an air of careless ease desired him to find and present to "that lady" a small purse of silver pieces.

For a moment Lettice's fingers drew back—the coins seemed to burn under her touch; but her motherly heart, finding excuses to the last, whispered that Marie meant kindly, and in manner only erred. So she took the purse. How could her daughter guess that it was the last resource of the aged parents against positive want?

Still—still the bitter truth remained untold. Marie seemed struggling between discomfort and a sense of duty, when there was heard without Sir John Pryse's heavy footstep and his loud whistle, subdued into a psalm-tune. Lady Vandyck rose.

"Marie, dearest, let us have one instant more alone; I have somewhat to say to thee," cried the poor mother.

"Say on then quickly: Sir John might come."



"A word will explain all. It grieves me bitterly, my child, to speak of this; but these troubled times have brought care even upon your father and me. Our pension from the King has ceased."

"Well, mother, I regret it; but what of that? I can offer neither counsel nor influence. Since Sir Anthony's death I have kept entirely aloof from the court, which will soon have ceased to be a court at all. And if I might advise, speak as little as you can about King Charles; and let the pension rest."

"You know not all, Marie." And even the careless daughter was startled to see the bitter expression on Lettice Ruthven's face. "You consider not that when the pension ceases your father and I must starve."

"Starve—my mother? What a disagreeable word! Pray do not use it."

"It is the truth."

Some conviction of this seemed forced upon Marie. She rose from her seat, and came beside her mother.

"You do not mean this: it cannot be that you and my father are in want. You know I would never suffer that."

The words were kind, though there was pride in the tone; but Lettice clung to the sweet, and perceived not the bitter. She clasped her daughter's hands and wept.

"I knew she would not forsake us—my only daughter—my darling! I said so when my husband forbade my coming."

"Did he indeed? Well, he was always strange, and

cared little about me," answered Lady Vandyck indifferently. "But come, mother, we must plan for the future. Of course you both will trust to me for subsistence. The world shall never say that Marie Vandyck left her parents to starve," she continued, and her beautiful face had in it more of haughtiness than filial sympathy. "Perhaps you might both come and live with me; but" (here she faintly coloured) "I will consult Sir John Pryse."

"Do not, I pray you. Why should a stranger come between parent and child? And—forgive me, Marie—but I cannot like that man."

Marie smiled half-contemptuously.

"I grieve to differ with you; but 'that man' has, by his influence with the Parliament, preserved to me my whole possessions, where the widow of King Charles's favourite might well have lost all. Still more I grieve, seeing that in nine days Sir John Pryse will be my husband."

"Thy husband!" echoed Lettice incredulously.

"It seems to have startled you, mother; yet nevertheless it is the fact. My first marriage was of her Majesty's will, my second is of my own. Nay, while you recover from this somewhat unflattering astonishment, I will go seek my betrothed." And with a proud step Lady Vandyck quitted the room.

She re-entered ere long, leaning on her bridegroom's arm. The mother sat as she had left her, having neither looked up nor stirred. Lettice rose now, however, and scanned with thirsting eagerness the mien and

countenance of the man who was to be her second son-in-law, and on whom her daughter's future peace must rest. Her glance fell, and she sighed.

"Sir John, I have explained all. Greet my mother Mistress Ruthven," said Lady Vandyck in a tone as if she desired to throw the veil of her own dignity round the humble obscurity of her parent. And Sir John Pryse, with a valorous condescension, kissed the little withered hand.

But Lettice felt that she stood there a stranger on her daughter's hearth—a pensioner on the charity of her daughter's lord. Yet still, though colder and colder sank her heart, she murmured, "It must and shall be borne, since, husband, it is for thee."

"My fair Marie has told me," began the young Roundhead, "that you, excellent madam, are in want of the good things of this world. Now, by my hali-dome—I mean by the ordination of Providence—for children to succour their parents is a virtuous and godly deed. Therefore, count on us, madam—count on us! Have I satisfied my charming bride?"

Marie smiled, and he smiled too, with marvellous self-content. And Lettice, her wan cheeks crimsoning, thought how bitter was an old age of dependence.

"Our plan, Mistress Ruthven, is this. Shall I explain it, Marie?" She acquiesced. "That you should abide with your daughter, or at least in her household. Such an easy life may best suit your years, and you can take care of your grandchild. Do you consent?"

"I know not. My husband loves quiet and freedom : he might not choose to dwell in this great house."

"Which he will never be required to enter. Madam, the offer was meant for yourself alone. John Pryse, the servant of the Parliament, could not venture to endanger his safety by harbouring a Royalist, a pensioner and follower of Charles Stuart."

Lettice was dumb with amazement.

"It is said," continued the bridegroom elect, "that Dr. Ruthven has long dealt in unholy charms and spells, which are blasphemous, and not to be allowed. Therefore, ere farther harm come to him, let him retire to some country village, where I will see that he shall not need."

Having delivered himself of all this generosity, Sir John Pryse lounged to the window, and gazed out listlessly on the Thames.

Lettice paused, breathed hard, and then rushed up to her daughter.

"Marie, say this is not true, or that you have not desired it!"

"What! Is there anything so marvellously wicked in this plan? I thought it for your good. You must have trouble enough with my old father, if what I have heard be true. Well, mother, why do you look so strange?"

"Go on!"

"I have little else to say," answered the lady carelessly. "Sir John knows best; I abide by his decision. As to the danger he would run, he is cer-

tainly right in that ; and you know I could not give up a husband for the sake of a father."

"Yet you would have me give up *my* husband—and for whom? Not for my daughter. Alas! I have no daughter," moaned the aged mother, struck with a grief worse than that of the childless. Suddenly she roused herself, and came up to Marie. With a fixed sorrow far deeper than when she looked on her two dead sons, she gazed into the beautiful face of the living lost.

"Marie, you have been a wife, you are a mother; hear now a tale you never wholly heard before. There was once a girl who learned to love with her whole soul one who was brought up with her from a child. They were parted. For sixteen years she never saw or heard of him, yet she loved on. She sought him out through all his miseries; Heaven helped her, and gave her power to save him. They were wedded—'twas not like your gay bridal, for it was in a prison. He was somewhat changed—grown old before his time, perhaps a little feeble and wayward. But she kept the troth of her youth, and her marriage-vow. She has 'loved, honoured, and cherished him' for nearly thirty years. She will do so until the end."

As Lettice spoke, the dignity of this great love, which had been the soul and centre of her life, seemed to encompass her round, so that even the haughty daughter quailed before it.

"I said nought to pain you, mother; I know you have been a good wife to my father. But for any

other plan than this of Sir John's, it cannot be. Let us talk no more on the matter," she added coldly, playing with her jewelled rings, and glancing less with affection than with the coquettish jealousy of wooing days to where her future lord was idly amusing himself.

Lettice pressed her hand upon her heart, where the last pulses of a mother's love—so long crushed, so keenly wounded—were ebbing into eternal silence. Then she said, speaking slowly and very calm, "Years ago, when I was past my youth, when I had thought to go childless to my grave, God sent me a daughter. We were poor then. I often toiled all day, and lay awake at night nursing my sickly babe. But I smiled, and said she would repay it all to my old age——"

"Mother, I cannot endure romance, but I wish to do all that I believe is my duty to do. As for affection—you know, parted as I was from you in my very childhood——"

"Ay, there is the grief again! I said to myself, 'What am I, simple Lettice Calderwood, to rear a daughter of the noble Ruthven line?' So I crushed my heart down, and gave up my darling. I wish now that I had then given her unto God, that she might be lying at peace in the grave, with her two brothers, rather than I should live to look on her as I look this day, and say—'*I have no child.*'"

Sir John approached. "Your mother seems excited, sweet Marie. Surely her mind wanders?" And he smiled. Marie exchanged glances with him, and smiled

too. There was neither anger nor pain on her brow ; smooth and polished it was as marble, an emblem of her own nature.

Lettice regarded her beautiful daughter once more with that long, long gaze which one gives, knowing it to be the last ; and then she turned to the door. Lady Vandyck followed her with graceful courtesy.

“You will depart thus, mother ? At least let me aid you in some way.”

There was no answer.

“Do not let the world, or even Sir John, suppose there is bitterness between parent and child. Give me your hand, mother.”

Lettice gave it. There was a light, cold pressure, and it fell. The lady went back to her lover ; the mother passed out, walking slowly, like one whose eyes are bound. Once, twice, she paused and looked back, as if she heard herself called. But it was only the light echo of a laugh, the same as the little Marie had once laughed beside her mother's knee. Lettice closed her ears, and, half-staggering as she moved, passed out of the house to the river side.

Gliding, gliding down the quiet Thames, it seemed as if her whole life passed by her like a vision : the merry childhood ; the long years of melancholy maidenhood, sad vigil to a brief day of joy ; the time of full content, when the house rang with children's voices, and the future almost blotted out the dreary past ; last of all, the still, but not sorrowful old age, when they two were left alone, husband and wife, waiting calmly

for the next great change—the only one that, as it seemed, could come. It was a life which contained much sorrow, as all human lives must; but it had been full of love. No woman would look back upon it and grieve.

Lettice Ruthven entered her own house, and sat long in meditation. Then she rose up as usual, and made ready for her husband's return. He came up, wearied out; but he poured into her lap, with an almost childish pride, a handful of silver, his fees as a wandering physician. When he was not observing her, Lettice took one of the coins, replaced it in lieu of that she had taken from her daughter's gift, and put Marie's purse aside, to be touched no more. Then she came to her husband, and her aged arms embraced his neck as she murmured, "Now I have no one but thee, no one but thee!"

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PART IV.

*"I have been young, and now I am old, yet never saw I the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread."*

This is the experience of good men, and of wise observers of life throughout all time.

Patrick Ruthven and his wife were not "forsaken." True, they were very poor—sometimes even positive need stood at their cottage-door, but it never entered. Some invisible hand always came between, and the



spectre passed. They lived in great peace ; for Patrick, growing feebler and more dreamy year by year, had few wants, few desires. To sit in the sun, or stroll about the meadows at Battersea, where their cottage was, now and then wandering on towards London—thus passed his quiet existence. Sometimes he gained a little money as a physician ; at other times their dependence was on gifts brought by the Scottish lady who had contrived their marriage in the Tower, and whose husband had readily changed sides, and gone over to the Commonwealth. She, with her daughters Grace and Mabel, sometimes visited them. But the old man and his wife were as it were childless : Marie, lady of Sir John Pryse, never crossed their threshold.

One day, when the January twilight was fast closing in, Lettice sat waiting for her husband. He had been absent since morning, having journeyed to London with a young boy whose life he had once saved in a fever, and who oftentimes faithfully guarded the old physician's failing steps. Lettice waited and waited, until it grew dark. The slow pulse of age is not easily stirred with the quick fears of youth. Yet she was growing alarmed, when she heard a well-known step, and Patrick Ruthven tottered in.

"My husband, what is this?" cried Lettice, for his aspect was wild and disordered. He trembled violently, and kept continually his hand before his eyes. At last he slowly removed it, and looked fearfully around.

"I think I shall not see it here ; I have seen it all the way home—the axe, the block—even the snow on

the hedge-side seemed dyed with blood! Oh, Lettice, Lettice, it was horrible!"

She, in her seclusion, knew nothing of what had happened on that fatal day, which she had spent calmly sitting in her quiet cottage—the 30th of January 1649. She thought her husband's mind was wandering, as it well might, to the horrors of his youth and middle age. She tried to soothe him, but in vain. Some great shock had evidently overwhelmed the old man's feeble powers. As he sat in his arm-chair, shudder after shudder came over him. Often he clutched his wife's hand convulsively, or muttered broken exclamations. At last he said, speaking somewhat more connectedly, "I will tell thee all, Lettice. This day I went to London; the streets were crowded with people, thronging, as it seemed, to some great sight. I asked a soldier if it were so. He laughed, and said there was indeed at Whitehall a rare show—a royal show. I thought it was the King restored, so I said with gladness, 'God bless King Charles!' Then the soldier smote me down. Look, Lettice!"

He held up his bruised arm, and his wife turned pale.

"Nay, it is nothing; for the people rescued me soon, and one man cried, 'We shall have blood enough on our heads this day.' So the crowd bore me on with them till we came to Whitehall."

Lettice ever changed countenance at that word, which brought back the great crisis in her life, when she came to the palace to plead for her husband's

freedom. She said anxiously, "And what didst thou see there, Patrick?"

"A black scaffold, an axe, a block—sights I knew well!" he answered, shuddering.

His wife came closer to him, but could not calm his rising agitation.

"Yes," he cried, "it was indeed a royal show—it was the murder of a king!"

Lettice cried out, "Have they done it then? Alas for the good king—the gentle king! He it was who gave me back my husband—the noble Prince Charles."

Patrick continued, unheeding.

"He came forth, stepping from his own palace-window to the scaffold. When he appeared women shrieked, even men wept. For me, the strength of my youth seemed restored; I lifted my voice in the crowd—'I am Patrick Ruthven! The King's father sent my father to the block, slew my two brothers, imprisoned me for seventeen years; yet would I not take life for life. God defend King Charles!' But the people crushed round, and silenced me. There was an awful hush; then I saw the axe shining—saw it fall."

The old man gasped, shivered, and was seized with a convulsion. All night he raved of things long past, of the scenes of blood which had marked his childhood, of those he had witnessed in the Tower. Towards morning these paroxysms ceased, and with ebbing strength there came over him a great calm. He tried to rise, and walked with Lettice's help to their fireside. But

he staggered as he moved, and sinking in his arm-chair, said piteously, "I am so weary—so weary!" then fell into a quiet slumber.

While he slept, there entered the Scottish countess. She was attired in black, her countenance full of grief and horror. She came hastily to say she was going abroad, to join her unhappy mistress. Her heart seemed bursting with its load of indignant sorrow.

"Look you," cried she, "I never loved the Stuart line: I believe that, *as* a king, the King erred; but I would have given my right hand to save the life of Charles Stuart. And I wish that I may yet see this vile England flow with blood, to atone for his which rests upon it this day! But, Lettice, you are calm—these horrors touch not you?"

And then mournfully Lettice told of what had befallen her husband.

The lady stepped quickly and noiselessly to look at Dr. Ruthven. He still slept, but over his face had come a great change. The temples had fallen in, there were dark lines round the eyes; yet over all was a sweetness and peace like that of childhood. Lettice almost thought she saw in him the image of the boy Patrick, her playfellow by the Cam. She said so to her friend, who answered nothing, but stood steadfastly gazing a long time. Then she took Lettice's hand, and looked at her solemnly, even with tears.

"I shall come back here to-morrow, Lettice; my journey can be deferred a day," she muttered, and departed.

Lettice Ruthven went to her husband's side, and watched him until he awoke. It was with a quiet smile. "What think you, dear wife? I have been dreaming of the old time at Cambridge. How long is that ago?" She counted, and told him, more than fifty years. "It seems like a day. How happy we were, Lettice—you, and William, and I! How we used to sit by the river-side on summer nights, and play by moonlight among the laurels! I think, when I gain strength enough, we will go and see the old place once more."

So he talked at intervals, all day referring to incidents which had vanished even from Lettice's memory. For thirty years he had not spoken of these things; and Lettice, while she listened, felt a vague awe stealing over her. Something she remembered to have heard, that at life's close the mind often recurs vividly to childhood, while all the intermediate time grows dim. Could it be so now?

At night Patrick did not seem inclined for rest. He said he would rather stay in his arm-chair by the fire-side. There, sometimes talking, sometimes falling into slumber, the old man lay, his wife watching over him continually. Gradually the truth dawned upon her—that on the path they had long trodden together *his* step would be the soonest to fail. To the eternal land, now so near unto both, he would be the first to depart.

"It is well!" she murmured, thinking not of herself, but only of his helplessness—as a mother thinks of a child whom she would fain place in a safe home rather than leave in the bitter world alone. "All is best

thus. It is but for a little while." And she ceased not to comfort herself with these words—"A little while—a little while!"

When Patrick woke his mind had begun to wander. He fancied himself in the old house at Cambridge; he talked to his aged wife as if she were the girl Lettice, whom he had loved. More especially, he seemed to live over again the night when he was taken prisoner.

"I will hide here, but I will not see Lettice—William's Lettice! I could not take away Lettice and break poor William's heart. If I suffer, no one shall know. Hark, how the laurels are shaking! We must keep close. I clasp thee, love—I clasp thee! Why should I fear?"

Thus he continued to talk, but gradually more incoherently, until, just before dawn, he again slept. It was a winter's morning, pale but clear. There was something heavenly in the whiteness of the snow; Lettice, looking at it, thought of the shining robes—white "such as no fuller on earth can whiten them"—with which those who have gone through much tribulation shall be clothed upon, one day. That day seemed near—very near, now.

She heard her husband call her. He had awakened once more, and in his right mind.

"Is it morning?" he asked, faintly. "I feel so strangely weak to-day. Lettice, take care of me."

She came to him, and laid his head on her breast.

Patrick looked up, and smiled. "Dear wife, my

comforter and sustainer! I have been happy all my life—I am happy now.”

He closed his eyes, and his features sank into an expression of perfect rest. Once or twice he murmured his wife’s name, those of his two boys, and another—unuttered for years—the name of *Marie*. Then, and not till then, the cruelly-forsaken mother wept.

The old man’s breathing grew fainter—the solemn hour was nigh. He said softly, “Lettice, pray!” She knelt beside him, still holding his hands, and prayed. When she arose, his soul was just departing. He whispered smiling, “Come soon!” And Lettice answered, “Yes, love—yes!” It was all the farewell needed for a parting so peaceful and so brief.

Thus Patrick Ruthven died.

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“You will come abroad with me, my poor Lettice,” said the Scottish lady, affectionately. But Lettice refused, saying it was not worth while changing her way of life for such a little time.

“Alas, a mournful life has yours been! It is always the good who suffer!” bitterly said the lady. “How strange appear the inequalities of this world!”

Lettice Ruthven lifted her aged face, solemn yet serene. “Not so! I loved, I have spent my whole life for him I loved; I have been very happy, and I thank God for all.” These were the only words that she would say.

Patrick Ruthven and his wife have long been forgotten ; even their very burial-place is unknown. But I think there lives not one true heart that, in pondering over their history, would not say, " These two were not unhappy, for they feared God, and loved one another.



## THE SELF-SEER.

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### CHAPTER I.

Unless above himself he can  
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man !—WORDSWORTH.

HERMAN WALDHOF was indulging in a love-reverie. He sat, leaning his chin upon his hand, in an easy, careless, *dolce far niente* attitude, before a large mirror.

His eyes were earnestly fixed, Narcissus-like, upon himself imaged therein.

Many said that young Herman Waldhof was the handsomest man in Leipzig, and Herman himself was scarcely disposed to deny the fact. It had been forced upon his notice so often during the last five-and-twenty years, that at length he took it for granted. Yet he was too high-minded to be very vain. He bore his honours as a monarch does his crown, conscious of the dignity which Fortune has bestowed, and therefore taking no pains to assert what must be obvious to all. But in the earnest look which Herman directed towards his mirror there was a deeper feeling than

mere vanity. He loved; he hoped, yet hardly believed, that he was beloved again; and in the reflected features opposite to him might be read a look of doubt and anxious inquiry.

When one loves, how quickly does this feeling come! how does the mirror, which was before hardly noticed, or made only the resort of idle vanity, become like an adviser—a friend! We wish to see ourselves with the eyes of the beloved. We wish to know, without flattery, what we really are. We gaze with a feeling of lingering fondness, in which vanity has no share, on those features which we would fain believe are fair and precious in another's sight. Ah, thence proceeds all their charm in our own! Thus, as the young lover tossed back the dark clustering curls, looked wistfully into the depths of the large eyes, and noted the graceful curves of the beautiful mouth, trying to criticise the well-known face which met his view with the indifference of a perfect stranger—his heart was full, not of himself, but of *her*.

A knock at the door made the young man instinctively turn his back to the mirror and take up a book, but he could not keep down the colour that *would* rise to his very forehead, at being discovered in the unmanly act of examining himself in the glass. Even though the discoverer was his friend and companion from boyhood, Leuthold Auerbach.

“Are you studying, or only dreaming, Herman?” said the new-comer, in those sweet, low tones, so rarely heard in a man's voice, which are always the index of

an eminently sensitive and gifted mind, which attract in a moment, and are the dearest heart-music in the world.

Herman answered the question with a faint laugh,—

“Doing both, I believe. But, I have a charge against thee, good friend, and from a fair one to whom thou wouldst not willingly give cause of anger. I was last night at the old professor’s, and the Lady Hilda”—the young man’s colour deepened a little as he uttered the name—“Hilda asked why thou wert not there too.”

“Did she so?” Leuthold said.

Herman was too much engrossed by his own feelings, or he would have seen the sudden paleness, the quivering lip, the involuntary clench of the hands, that his words brought to Leuthold. Alas! he, too, loved; but love to him was no joy, only hopeless pain.

“What shall I say in thy defence, false knight, when I see her to-morrow?” Herman continued.

“Again!” muttered Leuthold.

There was a sore pang at his heart, but he repressed it, and said, calmly,—

“The Lady Hilda is ever kind; she always was, since the days when I was a poor student in her father’s house. Tell her I was ill, or I would have come.”

“Thou art not well now, poor friend!” said Herman, turning round, and laying his hand on his friend’s shoulder. “Pale as ever—no, now thou art crimson! Why, Leuthold, thou hast been studying far too much.”

"It may be; a student must do so if he would attain his end. I am not like thee, Herman,—young, rich, handsome."

"Thou art quite as young," interrupted the other, "though thou dost not look so; and as rich, for thou hast enough for thy wants, which is more than I often have for mine, I candidly confess. As to being handsome—— But, pshaw! what nonsense is this! I am so anxious, so full of thought, I cannot jest any more. Leuthold, thou shouldst pity me!"

"Pity *thee*!" said the student. "Thee—the pride of Leipzig, admired by all, loved by——"

"Oh, Leuthold, I know not that Hilda loves me! Last night I thought her so cold, and there sat beside her that young Graf von P——, and she listened to him; she spoke fondly ——"

"I do not believe it," gravely answered Leuthold. "Hilda is too sincere, too pure-hearted, to sport with any one's feelings thus."

The lover clung eagerly to the willing belief.

"Ah, well, I might be wrong, but love is full of vagaries,—my whole soul is wrapped up in her! Tell me, Leuthold, thou who hast known her heart from childhood, whom she regards as a brother, am I such an one as Hilda would love?"

And Herman looked fixedly at his friend, to whom each unconscious word came like a barbed arrow. Yet not a muscle of Leuthold's face quivered beneath the gaze; he grew strong through the intensity of the love which had made of his heart not a home to abide

in, but a tomb wherein it must be buried for evermore. It gave no outward sign, no more than the poor clay resting under a green grave.

"Thou askest more than I can answer, dear Herman," said Leuthold. "But think what thou art!"

"Oh, that I could see myself!" cried the impetuous young man. "Oh, that I could see myself as any other man—how I look, how I speak, how I act! Do you know what I was so mad as to be doing but now?" he added, colouring deeply. "Playing pranks before the mirror, and trying to judge of my own face as I would that of the fool Von P——, or any stranger! Oh, if I could see myself as I really am,—most of all as I appear in Hilda's eyes! Is there no spell, no magic, that will give me my desire? Surely, Leuthold, thou who hast studied the deep secrets of alchemy, who hast beheld the great Helvetius face to face, must know something!"

"Speak not of these things," answered the student, solemnly. "To those who live in the world, in its gay realities, the inner world of mystery is not open. Yet if it were as thou sayest,—if we could gain this knowledge—I, too, would desire it equally. And it may be so," continued Leuthold, with wild and kindling eyes; "who knows! The more I study, the more I see that wisdom is unfathomable."

He rose up and paced the room with an energy that made his slight figure dilate, until it seemed in the twilight to grow to a giant's size. Deeper and deeper gathered the shadows in the large, lofty room: it was

a noble hall, which the wealth of Herman Waldhof had gained from its old baronial owners, whose ancestors seemed to frown from the walls upon the new possessor. The twilight faded, and all became wrapped in gloom. Herman watched the dim figure of Leuthold as he moved backwards and forwards, utterly unconscious of his friend's presence; sometimes murmuring, in a sort of monotonous chant, rhymes in a strange tongue, and then again maintaining a total silence. At last Herman, in the darkness, could only hear his footsteps resounding at measured intervals on the oaken floor.

All this time the young man never moved. Gay-hearted as he seemed, Herman was deeply tinctured with the belief in supernatural things, which was called forth by the mysterious acts and words of many wise men of the middle ages. On his friend Leuthold, whom he knew to be deeply read in the lore of the cabalists and alchemists, he ever looked with most reverent awe.

At last a touch on his arm made Herman start, and the student's voice—but so low and changed, that it seemed almost unearthly—fell on his ear:—

“It will be accomplished; wait and see: they are coming!” whispered Leuthold.

Overpowered with terror, Herman would have fled, but his friend held him with a grasp that seemed like that of an iron band.

“Weak man, wouldst thou shrink?” sternly cried the student.

"I shrink from meeting those thou hast called up—the fiends—the demons!"

"They are no demons, they are good spirits. Know, Herman, that each man born into the world has a guardian angel given him, which must attend him from birth until death. To the common herd of mankind, who eat and sleep, toil and rest, marry and die, without a thought beyond the petty round of daily life, this spirit is no more than an inward voice, the voice of conscience. But to those on whom God has bestowed His glorious gift of genius—a spark of His own divine essence—the angel of their being is far nearer; a presence that may be felt. The more they cultivate this inner sense, the stronger it becomes, until they see with the open eyes of the soul, and hear with its angel-ears.

"I, even I," continued Leuthold, while his voice rung through the gloom like the voice of an unseen spirit—"I, even I, in my poverty, in my loneliness, in my despair, have seen my Angel standing beside me, whispering comfort and wisdom and joy, such as no earthly sorrows could take away. And now, by the power of my will and my faith, I have again brought this celestial guardian; and not only mine, but thine! Listen, they are coming!"

"And I!" cried Herman, in deadly fear.

"Thou mayest hear, thou canst not see them. Kneel, cover thy face, and pray. Think of all pure and holy things, of thy love on earth, of thy trust in heaven. Remember, one evil thought will drive from

thee these blessed spirits. Herman, they come—they come !”

Herman listened to a sound which he rather felt than heard ; it was like the step of one beloved coming nearer and nearer, each soft foot-fall sending a thrill to heart. And then he perceived that Leuthold had unclasped his hand, but that Another was beside him. He fancied his hair was stirred by a soft breath, such as he had felt in dreams—dreams of Hilda, and it seemed that this angel-breath penetrated to his inmost heart, filling it with child-like purity and peace.

He was roused from this trance by the deep solemn tones of Leuthold, and knew that his friend was addressing no mortal, but the Angel of which he had spoken. With serene earnestness the student lifted up his voice, and told all his heart's desire to the mysterious Presences that were with them in the room. He spoke not in slavish fear, but like one who, with a lofty and awful joy, holds communion with those who, though superior, are drawn to him by love, until they speak as friend to friend.

And he was answered. From the silence came forth a voice—not human, and yet like humanity in its sweetness. Much of what it said was inexplicable to Herman, whose whole life had been spent in worldly delights, and who knew not the joys which the soul feels when retiring into communion with itself, and those essences to which it is akin. But Leuthold understood all.

“ Listen,” said the Angel, “ O thou who art my



care! Man's is a double existence. Ever following his spirit, as the shadow follows his body, is a second self. It is not his soul, but only the reflection of it, like the faint arch within the rainbow, or the giant mountain-shadows which mimic men. Generally this phantasm is inseparable from the reality which produces it; but at times man has been suffered to behold the reflex of himself; and often, too, has this second self appeared to those to whom the man was dear, a dim spectre of prophetic woe."

"I know it, I know it!" cried Leuthold, mournfully. "Even the night before death took my mother from me, as we sat together in the twilight, I saw a Shadow like herself come and sit opposite to us! And she knew it was a sign, and went in and lay down calmly to rest—a rest that was eternal." He paused—his silence showing on what a deep and tender nature had fallen this first wound. "But, Angel, I would not thus see the phantom of myself; I desire to behold my living form as with the eye of a spirit. Canst thou grant this?"

"Only thus. Thou must thyself become the attendant shadow; must abstract thy mind for a season from all earthly things, until it becomes, as in dreams, separate from the body. Then thy spirit, or that portion of it which is active in dreams, may float over its living self, and behold, for a time, all that thou dost and all that thou art, even like a disembodied soul. But know, for each day in which thou thus gainest thy desire, a year will be taken from thy mortal life."

"Even so—that would add to the boon," said Leuthold, softly. "But, Herman, life is bright to thee, wilt thou consent likewise?"

Herman shuddered and bowed his face lower to the earth, as he felt the invisible breath beside him form itself into a voice. But it was not like the one which had spoken to Leuthold—it sounded faint and indistinct.

"Once only in thy life mayest thou hear thy angel's voice, Herman! and once only is this faculty permitted to thee. Wouldst thou for a single day behold thyself?"

"I would—I would!" muttered Herman; and as he spoke the whole chamber was flooded with the light of the moon, as she broke through the edge of a dark cloud. He lifted up his head, but saw only his friend, who, pale and almost insensible, leaned against the wall, like one just awakened out of a dream.

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## CHAPTER II.

Let me behold my outward self, and look  
Within my spirit as within a book.  
What there is writ? Full many a mingled line  
Wise, foolish, fair, foul, earthly, and divine.  
Some shine out clear, on some dark sin-blots fall;  
But love's calm eye of mercy readeth all.

HERMAN rose up at dawn on the morrow, forgetting all the strange excitement which he had gone through. It had passed from his memory like a dream. He

leaped out through his low window into the glad daylight, walked through his beautiful domain, heard the birds singing a blithe welcome to the morning, saw the sunshine resting upon the noble old hall, until it looked almost as if it had renewed its youth. He felt to the full the happiness of life. All the fantastic imaginings of night had vanished with the coming of daylight.

Existence was in every way a reality to Herman Waldhof. He was the embodiment of youth in its full enjoyment of the present, keenly alive to every delight of sense, and revelling in life as a happy certainty of tangible bliss, quite distinct from the enthusiastic visions of the dreamer. A young man, full of health and gaiety—bound by no ties, save those he chose to forge for himself—rich, though, as he had said, his wishes often outran his wealth;—until the shadow of love fell over him, Herman had never known a care. Yet his love, though it had made him more thoughtful, brought with it no real sorrow, but only those few faint doubts which nourish and strengthen as April rain. Love without such would be like the spring without showers.

Waldhof bounded through his fields, exulting in the bright day, and in his own happiness. He called his huntsmen around him, and made ready for the chase. It would serve to beguile the tedious hours until the lover could again seek the presence of his beloved. But before he set out, he rode with his companions through the street where Hilda dwelt. A goodly

troop of young men they were, but there were none so noble in bearing as Herman Waldhof. He knew it, too; and as he passed Hilda's window, he felt almost glad that the horseman who rode beside him was the Graf von P——, a small and ungainly man, badly mounted. As Herman made his own fine charger curvet, and, doffing his hat, let the sunshine rest on his curling hair, a smile of proud delight curved his lips. For he saw through the lattice two fair eyes, which lingered not on the Graf von P——, but on himself.

"I wonder," thought the young man, "how I appear to-day in Hilda's sight?"

As the idea crossed his mind, it seemed that his steed dashed wildly along, confusing all his faculties. His eyes grew dazzled with the motion caused by passing swiftly through the air, and he hardly knew what affected him, until he woke out of a kind of stupor. He felt himself floating through the air as one does in dreams; but his personal identity was gone. He glided along as bodiless as a winged thought, and yet he clearly distinguished everything around him as when he had been gifted with corporeal senses. He was floating amidst the trees of a wild forest, he heard the ringing music of the horn, and beneath him galloped a troop of gay huntsmen. One among them was remarkable for personal beauty and agility. He sat his steed with the grace and firmness of a young Greek warrior, and his joyous laugh resounded through the forest as if he had been the light-hearted Actæon of old. In this youth, so apparently happy, so beautiful

in person, the hovering spirit of Herman Waldhof recognised himself. His wish had been attained.

Like a cloud in the air the Shadow floated over the merry troop, and followed them through the glades of the forest. It beheld its corporeal self—the man who was Herman Waldhof; it scanned his features with keen inquiry. They were as perfect in form as the mirror had always reflected them; but now, when agitated by the play of expression, there was a vague deficiency—a want of that inexpressible charm which sometimes makes the most ordinary face enchanting by the inward beauty of the mind. Herman's features were as unchangeable in their expression as those of the Apollo Belvidere—if you sought anything beyond, you might as well seek it in that marble. The Shadow into which a portion of the young man's soul had fled, retained enough of its mortal nature to feel this want and deplore it, and turned its observation to other qualities of its second self.

Most noble was the bearing of the young huntsman, but still an unprejudiced eye might distinguish in his manly form too much of strength and too little of grace. He was an incipient Hercules, who might become in middle age anything but lithe and active. Winning he was in manner, and yet, both in that and in his tone of voice, was apparent an occasional harshness that in an inferior would have been most unpleasing, but which was disregarded in the wealthy and fascinating Herman Waldhof. His companions treated him as a privileged person, bore with

his haughtiness, and laughed at his jests, even when directed against themselves.

"We shall find no game to-day," said Herman, with a shade of annoyance perceptible in his tone.

"You have driven it far into the inner forest with your constant hunts, Waldhof," answered one of the young men. "Truly, all we huntsmen ought to be very grateful for a whole year's amusement at your cost."

"Oh, 'tis nothing," returned Herman. "I love the chase, therefore I follow it. Having plenty of horses and every other appurtenance of wealth, I can oblige my friends and please myself with their society at the same time. By-the-by, Von P——, why did you not go to my stable? My grooms would have better provided you than with that sorry steed of yours?"

The Graf von P—— turned crimson with vexation.

"A poor nobleman is sometimes worse off than a rich commoner, but he is not the less proud. With all thanks for his courtesy, Herr Waldhof will excuse my preferring my own horse."

"Just as you like!" answered the young man, carelessly, totally unconscious of the pain he had caused; but the Shadow of his being saw in that passing incident, an ostentation for which the open-handed generosity of youth could not atone, and a thoughtlessness of others which showed selfishness lurking in the depths of an otherwise frank and kindly nature. A superficial observer might not notice these things, but one who could read the inner foldings of the human heart would at

once recognise them as blemishes in the character of Herman Waldhof.

The young huntsmen rode merrily on, and the prey was found. Now all the ardour of the chase began. Exulting in his dauntless courage, Herman was the foremost in all dangerous exploits. His eyes flashed, his colour heightened, and his voice rang out merrily. More than once he dashed between the enraged boar and one of the assailants, thereby perilling his own life, and preserving that of another fellow-creature. And then they all cried, "how generous, how heroic was the young Herman Waldhof!" and the dim Shadow which followed him rejoiced triumphantly in the praise of its other self.

The hunted boar turned at bay, and the crisis of the sport arrived. All drew back, and left the master of the chase to perform the crowning exploit. It was an honour which Herman had ever claimed as a right. He glanced proudly round and spurred his horse, poising his spear with a firm, bold hand. But, in a moment, another horseman dashed forward, and despatching the wild beast, turned exultingly to claim the final honours of the chase. It was the Graf von P——!

Instantly the beaming face of Herman was darkened by a thunder-cloud of anger, until the features that were before so beautiful grew almost hideous in their wrathful disdain. He was about to plunge his horse forward, and direct his reeking spear—not against the dead boar, but the living man—had not a murmur from the other huntsmen arrested him.

"It was not right of Von P——!" "Herman should have slain the boar!" said various of his friends.

"Have I done aught to anger Herr Waldhof?" observed the surprised nobleman.

"You have insulted me!" angrily exclaimed his rival. "I am the lord of the forest: it is my place, not yours, to despatch the beast. Look to yourself, my lord! Herman Waldhof is the equal of any Graf in Germany."

"I am a stranger—I know not your customs. If I have erred in courtesy, I regret it," answered the young nobleman, with an unmoved dignity that turned the tide of opinion in his favour. Herman rode homewards; and as the hovering spirit looked down upon him, it saw how evil passions had marred the fairest characteristics of nature; and how a stranger, beholding him a prey to violent and angry feeling, would see no trace of the noble youth who had been so lately the admiration of every eye.

On his journey home the Shadow accompanied him, and watched the gradual dispersion of bitterness from a nature that never retained evil long. And as the hour drew nigh that was to bring him to Hilda, every trace of wrathful emotion was swept away under the soothing influence of his love. Apparently, he thought of Hilda—he closed his eyes, and called up her dear face to his memory—he imagined how she would welcome him, what he should say to her, and what she would answer: and in these delicious love-reveries an inexpressible sweetness became diffused over his face. When the



shadowy Self followed him to the presence of his love, it exulted over his grace and beauty.

Hilda was not, like her lover, perfect in form and face. A passing eye might have overlooked her, but those who loved her thought her fair, and all loved her who knew her. A painter would have adored her soft brown eyes and lovely hair, and a musician would have said her voice was the sweetest in the world; and yet neither might have called Hilda beautiful. It was the atmosphere of love and purity in which she moved, investing all her looks, words, and deeds, with an irresistible charm, that made her the ideal of perfect womanhood.

She rose up and welcomed her lover—in her heart of hearts she knew that he *was* her lover, though no formal words had passed between them. Yet with a maidenly reserve she shut up in her heart the secret consciousness which made its chiefest joy. Herman thought her tone was cold—that her hand touched his with a careless pressure: he did not know that at the sound of his horse's approach, a few moments before, those little hands had been pressed wildly upon the throbbing heart, and then spread over the fair, blushing face, that would fain hide even from the dumb walls its radiant yet timid happiness.

Herman came and sat by his beloved; the ever attendant Shadow watched him, as he talked in a tone low and gentle. How winning he could be at will!—truly it was no marvel that Hilda loved him! He spoke of common things, of his day's sport, and

then, with a frankness that showed in a golden light all the higher qualities of his nature, he confessed to Hilda the incident which had annoyed him. Perhaps mingled with this sincerity was a consciousness that the story would come best from his own lips, and that Hilda would seek to palliate a fault so candidly acknowledged, thus restoring him to his own good opinion, which he had well-nigh lost.

But Hilda listened without a word of praise or extenuation. She could not trust her voice, lest it should betray the love that was so nigh overflowing, and yet had no warrant for its utterance. And perhaps, too, she felt a woman's pain that a shadow of error should dim the brightness of her idol.

"I have heard of this before," she said.

"Who told you? Who dared speak ill of me to you?" cried the young man, and the dark cloud of anger again came over him. The Shadow saw, and fled back troubled.

Hilda lifted her eyes to his with a look of pained surprise, mingled with reproach. "We will talk no more of this," she answered, gently.

Her look and tone calmed her lover in a moment.

"Do not chide me, fair and dear maiden," replied he. "I was in error, perhaps not so much as they say and as you imagine, but still I am willing to acknowledge aught that you please."

His words were humble, yet there was pride in their tone, as if he expected them to be contradicted immediately; but this the truthful spirit of the young

girl would not do. She loved him well; and love, which made all his good qualities shine in her eyes with double lustre, rendered her proportionately quick-sighted to his failings.

"Herr Waldhof," said Hilda, gravely, "I ask no confession if caused alone by your *friendship*"—the innocent hypocrisy of those dear lips!—"your friendship for me. It was not right of you to be so angry with the Graf Von P——, who meant you no disrespect. Besides, as your friend, he——"

"*My* friend! the poor, cowardly creature *my* friend! Say your own, rather, if so you mean!" cried the lover, hardly suppressing his jealous indignation.

Hilda's womanly pride was roused.

"As you will," she answered, with a quivering lip and heightened colour. "I am not used to discussions so warm as this, therefore, Herr Waldhof, I will bid you adieu, as I believe my father desires your presence."

She lightly touched the hand which, in his mortification, the young man scarcely held out to her, and, with a step of maidenly dignity, glided from the room.

With a sense of the deepest abasement, the shadowy Presence looked down upon its other self, as the young man paced the room in violent emotion, raving against Hilda, his rival, and the whole world.

"She loves me not! she scorns me! she pleads in behalf of the wretch Von P——!" he muttered. "Not one gentle feeling is in her heart for me, or she would not have spoken thus!"

Oh, self-deceiver, blinded by anger! could thine eye but have pierced into the next chamber, and seen that weeping girl who passed from thee but now with so firm a step; couldst thou have known the anguish that came with the discovery of one fault in thee, and yet the love which would fain wash it all away with pardoning tears, and defend thee against the whole world!

Herman leaped on his horse, nor stayed his frantic speed until he reached his own home. He locked himself up in his chamber, and sank down exhausted. Long he remained in a state which seemed half-sleeping, half-waking, until the morning birds aroused him. Then the whole charm was dispelled; the events of yesterday returned vividly to his memory: he became conscious of the double existence which had then been his, and knew—oh, with what bitterness came the knowledge!—that he had *beheld himself*.

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### CHAPTER III.

Lo, ye have souls immortal and sublime  
To be made infinite in love and light,  
And heavenly knowledge, if ye will but ope  
The inner fountains, and the inner eyes,  
And see the deep and full significance  
The worth and wherefore of the life of man.—C. MACKAY.

LEUTHOLD watched from the window of the small room where he slept, ate, and studied, the merry troop of huntsmen go by. He saw, loftiest among

them, the graceful head of his friend Herman. The clanging of the hoofs in the street below had disturbed him from his studies; and as he closed the window and turned away from the sunshine, the glittering dresses, and the sound of gay voices—the darkness and solitude of his own poor chamber struck him mournfully. He leaned his forehead against his open book, and tried to shut out from his view alike the brightness without and the gloom within—both were equally painful.

“How happy they seem! how gay!” thought the young man with sadness. “And I? — Well, let me calmly think what I am, and what I would fain be. Would I change with them?—become noble, and handsome, and rich as they; have no care but for the pleasures of life? Ah, but age will come; the strong limbs will grow feeble; the gay spirit become soured; the mind sink to a mere animal existence. Would I change with them, then? No!”

And the student strove to cheer himself with the consciousness of the high aim of life. He remembered that man’s godlike mind is not given him to be cast aside like an useless thing, nor is he created to waste his existence in the passing pursuit of pleasure. While he pondered, he looked around on the dear companions of his loneliness—precious, though silent—his beloved books; and he envied not Herman Waldhof himself, save for that most priceless treasure, which the student would have died to gain—Hilda’s love.

“How noble he looked as he passed her window!”

thought Leuthold. "How dare I compare myself to him!" and the student gazed mournfully down upon his own slight, meagre limbs, and thin hands. "Oh, that I could die—that I could lose the memory of this bitter, hopeless love!" Bowing his head upon his knees, and forgetting his manhood, he gave way to the weakness of a nature which resembled a woman's in sensitiveness, and sobbed as in his childish days.

With the reaction of his feelings the young man grew calmer. "I will be patient—I will endure," continued he, pursuing the train of his thoughts. "The sunshine of life is not for me: I must train my spirit to live content in its shade. Why murmur, poor heart! the future will but be as the past. From my cradle life has been a solitude. I have never known the joy of being beloved!" But while Leuthold uttered this, a remorseful pang touched his heart, and a faint, spirit-like voice, seemed to fall on his ear, — "My son, my son, hast thou then forgotten me?"

The student threw himself on his knees, and cried,— "Forgive me, oh, my mother, if this wild love for a moment shuts out the memory of thine! Pure and angelic spirit, comfort me now!" He clasped a crucifix, and remained muttering the habitual devotions of a religion, in which even the depths of his philosophical learning had not shaken his belief—it was too near his heart for any mere powers of intellect to overthrow it. Gradually a numbness oppressed his faculties; the realities around him faded into shadows, until he

seemed to wake at last, like one who, dreaming, dreams he is roused from a dream. In that moment, the mysterious change for which he had longed passed over Leuthold; his spirit became divided, and beheld its bodily Self.

The form which engarmented that pure and noble soul was not beautiful. The Shadow looked down upon Leuthold as he knelt, and thought how mean was the figure of the student—diminutive, stooping, though not actually deformed. The face was sallow; the features irregular; and when in repose, ordinary and inexpressive. The sole redeeming portions of the face were a high, broad forehead, and large, soft, gray eyes, shaded by lashes as long and silken as a woman's. But it could not be denied that, as he appeared now, scarce a trace of personal beauty did the student possess.

Leuthold rose, put aside his books, and went out into the streets of Leipsic. The invisible Shadow followed him, and watched him as he moved. His slight, low figure would have passed unnoticed through the crowd of a great city; but here in Leipsic, which was for ages the stronghold of learning, there were many to whom Leuthold Auerbach was known, as one whose wisdom surpassed his years. Not a few, both of the old whose companionship he sought, and the young who came to him for instruction, doffed their hats as he passed. The pleasant smile of recognition lighted up his face, and the Shadow saw that his step grew firmer, and even his stature seemed to rise, with

a consciousness that he was respected by those whose respect was grateful to him.

He went on to the great hall of Leipsic, where students and professors were accustomed to meet for discussion, and to give and receive instruction. It was a high day, and within those walls were collected many of the learned from all parts of Germany. As Leuthold passed through the division where sat the younger of the company, many of them his own pupils, he heard a murmur of respectful congratulation. His eye brightened, and his lips relaxed into a smile almost as bright as Herman's. The Spirit felt—phantom as it was—as if a sunbeam of gladness had shot through its airy being.

“We have been looking for you, Herr Auerbach,” said one of the young men. “The great doctor from Cologne has mentioned you with praise; and our professor has chosen you to deliver the harangue, as being the most learned of the students of Leipsic.”

Leuthold's cheek flushed with pleasure; and he walked with a dignified step to the upper end of the hall, where the learned conclave awaited him. There he heard that the fame of Leuthold of Leipsic had reached to distant cities. Many, whose heads were white with long years of study, came forward to press with friendly grasp the hand of the young man. He, in self-possessed yet modest humility, which gave a gracefulness to his whole deportment, received their congratulations and praise.

“They told me I should see a plain, common-look-



ing young man," whispered the great *savant* of Cologne. "I do not find him so. His manner is dignified yet retiring; his countenance beams with intellect."

"You are right. He has the beauty of a noble mind. I am proud of my pupil," answered the professor, who was Hilda's father.

The Shadow heard, and its airy essence thrilled with joy.

Now, from amidst the crowded assembly, rose the voice of Leuthold Auerbach. It was low and tremulous at first, as if oppressed by the dead silence around; but as the speaker advanced it became firm. Already we have said that Leuthold possessed that irresistible charm—a low, clear, and melodious voice. These exquisite tones were now like music, accompanying the deep wisdom which they uttered. Leuthold was not an impassioned orator; with him all feelings lay deep, giving an outward calmness to all he said and did; therefore his words now were more those of a sage who reasoned for a great truth, than of a young man who poured forth his emotions in flowery eloquence. But the clearness and earnestness of his own mind communicated itself to his speech, and thence to the heart as well as to the intellect of the multitude, who listened as it were one man. When he concluded, first a deep silence, more expressive than applause, and then a shout of congratulation that made the hall re-echo, proclaimed the triumph of the student.

Almost overpowered, Leuthold sank back, and his friends crowded round him. Foremost among them

was the learned professor, who had been his teacher in the days of his early youth.

"You must come home with me to-day," said the kindly old man. "Hilda will rejoice to hear of your success."

The Shadow looked down upon itself, and saw that Leuthold's face glowed with rapture, and his very lips trembled with emotion.

"I am weary now, my kind master," answered he, taking the professor's hand affectionately; "but I will come to-night—yes! tell *her* I will come to-night," he repeated, almost unconsciously.

Still under the influence of the joy which gave beauty to his whole appearance, Leuthold took his way homeward. He sat a long time in his quiet room—it hardly looked so lonely as it had done in the morning, and he himself appeared no longer the pale and drooping student, who had knelt in despair before the crucifix. He rested his head on his hand, and the ever present Phantom watched. It was a face that any man might have looked on with reverence, any woman with love. As the day wore on, he heard the troop of huntsmen go by on their return: but they gave him no pain; he did not even move to watch them. When evening came, he wrapped himself in his cloak, and went out to visit Hilda. Ere he reached the door a horseman galloped furiously past him. Leuthold turned, and saw that it was Herman, his dark hair flying in the wind, and his whole mien disordered.

"Poor Herman! he is annoyed; perhaps he has

been unsuccessful at the chase, in which he delights so much," thought the student; and in his simple and gentle nature, Leuthold almost reproached himself for being happy while his friend was not so. But he remembered Herman no longer when he entered Hilda's dwelling.

It was a small, pleasant chamber, into which he passed; how well he knew every nook of it! There, night after night, in the long winter evenings, the motherless, lonely youth had been made welcome by his kind old master; and the little Hilda had joyfully welcomed a playfellow who was so much gentler than her own wild brothers. There, as years went on, the young man had listened to the evening instructions of the professor, while Hilda, now growing womanly and reserved, but kind and sisterly still, sat by. Leuthold glanced lovingly towards the corner where she used to work, the lamp shining on her smooth brown hair, and her quick-moving fingers. Oh, how happy were those days! Musing thus, the student waited for the entrance of his beloved.

Hilda came at last. She met him cordially, took his hand in both hers—the poor Leuthold, how he trembled at the touch!—and told him how glad she was of his triumph that day.

"My father is proud of you, Leuthold; we are all proud of you. You must not forget us when you are a great man!" said Hilda, with a frank and pleasant smile.

The student looked at her with his whole soul in his

eyes—those beautiful gray eyes! He leaned over her as she sat, and became absorbed in the bliss of her presence. They talked, as they always did, of things that both loved, of the future that was opening before their young life; she with the open-hearted kindliness of her nature, conversing with a dear friend; and he drinking in love ineffable from her every word and look. The Shadow hovered over him, and perceived how that the magic of love gave new music to his voice, and new eloquence to his tongue; how it lighted up his face, and made his homely features almost divine with the radiance of a commanding intellect, and a heart full of all that is pure and good in man. The spirit beheld, and gloried in itself.

Hilda talked to Leuthold with the kindly earnestness of a heart which had nothing to conceal—alas for him, not even the sweet secret of love! She praised him, she spoke of his coming career of fame, and, more glorious still than fame, the proud delight of a life spent in the soul's true vocation—that of adding to the wisdom of past ages, and of so carrying one's own lamp, be it great or small, that future generations may grow wiser and better through its guiding radiance.

“You are gentle as well as wise, Leuthold,” said the maiden. “You will go through life happy and beloved. All is well with you.”

Her voice had a softened tone, almost sad; and her whole manner was subdued—for while speaking to Leuthold, she was thinking of one dearer. The

student was deceived by her kind words, the tremulousness of her voice, the sudden changing of her cheek, her troubled and anxious air. He believed—oh, the madness of the dream!—that there was yet hope for him, that in time he might be loved even as he loved.

He mentioned Herman; but she who in happiness would have blushed and trembled at the chance hearing of the beloved name, now in her sorrow could listen to it unmoved. No outward sign of love for his rival came to dim the young man's hope.

"I saw Waldhof on my way hither, and thought he would have been with you to-night," continued Leuthold.

"He came, but soon departed," said Hilda, calmly; and the student dared ask no more. Could it be that Herman Waldhof had returned an unsuccessful wooer? And if so, why? The bare idea made the heart of him who loved so madly throb with added violence. He was too noble to rejoice at the sorrow of his friend; and yet human nature is weak, and Love is a king who conquers all other feelings. That Hilda should be free—that he might dare to seek her love! The thought overpowered him; and, as the Shadow of his soul read all these conflicting feelings in the face of the student, it became troubled likewise.

"What ails thee, Leuthold?" said Hilda, kindly, as she noticed his agitated countenance. "Thy hand is burning, too!" and the touch of her soft cool fingers thrilled to his heart. "Dear friend," she added, "I

must send thee away. Go home and sleep—this day's happiness is too much for thee."

"It is—it is too much," passionately cried the student. He dared not trust himself with another word or look, but, bidding Hilda a hurried adieu, he went out.

In the cool night, beneath the quiet stars, his frenzy passed away; a soft dreaminess overpowered him, and the spell was ended. Leuthold knew that his desire had been fulfilled; clearly and distinctly his natural self remembered all that the Shadow had beheld. The knowledge gave him no false pride; but a delicious consciousness of what he was in himself and how he was regarded by others, crept into his heart, and imparted to it courage, firmness, and peace. The timid, self-abased student now knew his own worth, and became brave.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

"Sorrow, there seemeth more of thee in life  
Than we can bear, and live; and yet we bear."—LOWELL.

"What is good for a bootless bene?"—WORDSWORTH.

READER, hast thou ever known one of those happy moments when thy soul suddenly passes out of darkness into light—when, after wearily walking in gloom, the sun of some long-shrouded joy gleams through the mist, and thy tears are dried up like dew-drops in the morning. Life becomes pleasant to thee—all things look beautiful in thine eyes, as in those of a blind man

who has just received sight; thou rememberest no more the time of darkness, but goest forth rejoicing in the unhopèd-for light.

Thus it was with Leuthold, when at sunrise he awoke. How sweet was the waking! First, there came the dim memory of some inexplicable happiness, and then a name rose to his lips. The remembrance of his love—day by day his earliest waking thought—came upon him with a full tide of recollection. But there was a change. The young man rose up and looked out on the daylight; never had it before seemed so fair. His eyes grew dim with overpowering bliss; he stretched out his arms, as if he would embrace the whole world in the fulness of his joy; he murmured the name of her he loved, adding to it those words which he had never yet dared to utter—“*Mine own! mine own!*”

Alas! alas! for the love that can thus deceive itself!

Leuthold went to his books, but his ideas wandered. What had philosophy to do with love? Sometimes a painful thought of Herman flitted across his mind. If Hilda loved him not, how wretched he must be!

“But he will forget it in time. Herman’s love is not like mine,” murmured the student. “He has many joys; I only one—but that passing all others!”

Again came Hilda’s image; and the young lover gave himself up to a sweet reverie. He pictured his future life; he conjured up the vision of a home, calm, peaceful, where he might follow the pursuits he loved, and become learned and honoured among men.

He thought how proudly the professor would give his daughter to one who deserved to win her; and, mingled with the idea of the old man, came that of childhood; of sweet young faces crowding round him; of fame to be reaped for them, that they might rejoice in their father's name when he was in the dust; and above all, the image of Hilda, in wifehood, in motherhood, in still fair and still-beloved old age. How they twain would glide together through life! not living as the worldly do—as if this existence were all—but ever looking upwards together, firmly believing that those who are one in love, and one in heart and mind, whatever be the after destiny of the soul, will never be divided.

All day Leuthold could not drive away the blissful dream. It nestled close to his heart, and would not go; it followed him when he went out into the busy streets; it coloured everything with its own rosy light. The faces he met seemed to peer into his, as if divining the secret of his happiness. Only one fear oppressed him—lest he might perchance see Herman. But the day passed and Herman came not. In the evening Leuthold went out into the open country, where he thought no prying eyes could behold his joy. Yet, even there, the clouds as they passed over him seemed to form themselves into the semblance of Hilda's face, and the little birds as they sang almost "syllabled her name." All nature to Leuthold was full of love.

As he walked dreamily along, a step overtook him, his hand was warmly grasped, and Herman stood before him.



"Why, you are sauntering like a man asleep!" said young Waldhof.

Leuthold changed colour, and looked anxiously at his friend. Herman's face was not without some traces of agitation; but there was no sorrow there.

"I have sought for you everywhere," continued the other. "I have much to tell, Leuthold."

"Have you, too, attained your desire?" asked Leuthold, hurriedly. "Have the angels we beheld that night——"

"I dreamed a dream, but I have forgotten it now, save for what it taught me. Oh, Leuthold, I have had a bitter lesson, but it has ended in joy—Hilda loves me!"

There are strokes so terrible, so stunning, that the heart within us seems to turn to ice, and that is all. A thunderbolt sometimes slays without an outward wound. Thus it was with Leuthold. His life's hope was shattered, but no visible token betrayed the death-stroke within.

Herman drew his friend's arm within his own, and they sat down under a tree. There, with his face turned away from Leuthold, the young man told the whole story of his anger, and its punishment.

"This morning," he cried, "I knew myself as I had never known before. I was humbled to the dust. I longed to throw myself at Hilda's feet, and say, 'Hate me, despise me; I deserve it. I am not worthy to look upon thee, and yet I love thee!'"

"And thou didst say so, Herman?" said the student very calmly.

"Yes, best Leuthold; my good angel was with me: I poured out my heart before her in its shame, in its humility, and she contemned it not. She forgave me for my love's sake. Listen to what she said—every one of her sweet words is written on my heart. 'Thou art very thoughtless, Herman—thou art full of faults—thou art not half so gentle as Leuthold; and yet I love thee—only thee.' And then she laid her dear arms round my neck.—Why, Leuthold, how thou shiverest!"

"The wind is cold—very cold," muttered the unfortunate student.

"Then take my cloak. Come—we will sit no longer here: thou art not so strong as I," answered the other, as with unwonted gentleness of manner he led his friend homeward. Happy love had given all his better feelings freer play.

"I sometimes think it strange that thou shouldst never have loved Hilda," said Herman, as they walked on slowly, "or that she should not have loved thee."

"Loved *me*!—me!" repeated Leuthold.

"Yes, it might have been. I was almost jealous of thee when Hilda spoke so warmly of thee this morning, and I told her so. But she only smiled, and said thou hadst never dreamed of such a thing—that thou wert as a brother to her, and hadst never loved aught except thy books. But the time will come, Leuthold—Hilda says so—when thou, too, wilt know the bliss of

happy love. Thou shouldst have heard her praise thee, ay, even beyond myself. And then she described the sort of damsel that would win thy hard heart—beautiful as an angel, gentle as a dove. Ha! ha! Leuthold, dost hear?” laughed the gay-hearted young man.

Leuthold laughed too. So strong was his self-control that the keenest ear could not have distinguished a discordant tone in that awful mirth. The friendly darkness hid the convulsions of his features, the clench of his hands, the torturing pain that seemed as if a fiend's clutch were at his throat; and Leuthold conquered. But angels would have looked down and wept over him who struggled so fearfully with himself, that in the contest life was almost riven asunder. At his own door the student parted from Herman, kindly, cheerfully, as usual; nay, listened to the careless footstep of the young man as he passed down the street, humming a light ditty, half-playful, half-tender, for it was of love. The sounds died away, and Leuthold was alone.

Let us not depict the anguish of that first hour of terrible awakening from the dream of a lifetime. They to whom love is but the crowning link of many sweet bonds, the last nectar-drop in a cup already running over with all life's other blessings, can never know what it is to those who have nought else. Such love—the love of years—is not merely the chief aim of life; it is life itself. What must the rending be? We cannot paint—we dare not! God help those who have thus lost all!

A night of agony passed, and Leuthold had striven with his own soul, until he had taught it that most blessed of lessons—to endure. In the silence and gloom a spirit-hand had been laid upon his heart, and its wild beatings grew still. A spirit-voice had breathed in his ear, “Peace, peace! others, too, have suffered and found rest.” Then Leuthold answered in his soul—“Yes, I know, in the grave.” But the voice replied, solemnly and reproachfully—“And in life, too, there is peace. Thinkest thou that the All-good would send His children on earth for cureless sorrow? There is no grief so heavy that it cannot be borne, until patience becomes in the end calmness and peace.” And the gnawing pain in the student’s heart ceased: he grovelled no longer on the floor of his chamber, wrestling with his despair, but looked upward to the sky. It was still and clear, but all starless; and Leuthold thought it was an image of his own future. As he looked, the horizon brightened, and his tearless, burning eyes beheld the coming dawn. Then he knew that there is no night so long and dreary but morning will come at last. The fountains of his heart were unsealed—tears came, and they soothed him. He laid down, and slept a sleep as calm as if angels watched around his pillow. It might have been so—who knows?

While many of the dwellers in Leipsic were yet sleeping, Leuthold Auerbach went forth from his native town, as he resolved, for ever! He left kindly tokens for all whom he regarded; but he bade farewell

to none. No one knew of his going until he had departed; and he gave no clue as to whither he was journeying. Perhaps he hardly knew himself; but he felt that he could not stay at Leipsic. A restless desire for wandering took possession of him. He seemed as though he could not breathe until he had shut out from his eyes, heart, and mind, those scenes where he had been at once so happy and so wretched—until he had placed the wide world between him and his lost hope.

As before said, he went away without one adieu even to Hilda. He could not look again upon her beloved face, knowing that all hope was lost for ever. Against his reason—almost against his conviction—one faint ray had clung to his heart during these long years of hidden love: all was dark now. Ere long he knew that the total cessation of a flickering hope is far easiest to bear,—at least after a time; but this truth he had yet to learn. Now, his only strength seemed to consist in flying far away from the spectre of a vanished joy.

Leuthold passed by the dwelling of Hilda, and his heart melted. In all his agony was mingled no anger against her. She loved him not, but she had not deceived him: he had beguiled himself. She was still the angel of his life, the unconscious origin of all that was pure and good in his nature, the awakener of his soul. Therein, her image shone unclouded still. In the lonely sunshine of early morning, Leuthold stood by her garden-gate; he pressed his lips to the cold stone where her hand had often rested in their

many adieux, and prayed that she might be blessed through life, and happy in the love of him she had chosen.

While he lingered, he heard the trees rustling in the garden; a light footstep sounded along the walks; and a low singing was heard, that seemed to come from a heart overladen with its own happiness.

It was Hilda's voice. Leuthold could bear no more; he fled away—far, far, as if his feet were winged. The dream of his youth was ended for ever.

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#### CHAPTER V.

“Look not mournfully into the Past; it returns no more; wisely improve the Present; and go forth into the shadowy Future without fear, and with a manly heart.”—LONGFELLOW.

THE high mass of Easter was being celebrated in Haarlem Cathedral. The deep-toned organ poured forth its volume of sound, the censers gave out their incense, and the priests murmured the low monotonous prayers of a religion whose mysterious beauty appeals to the heart, more than to the understanding. The cathedral was filled with kneeling worshippers of every rank. The rude boor from the Dutch marshes, but a few degrees superior to his barbarian ancestor, of whom the refined Tacitus scornfully writes; the rich citizen of Haarlem, who, contented with his wealth and ignorance, left the duties of religion and learning

to the priests of his faith—a faith which he professed, but never attempted to comprehend—were both there; and, lastly, there were chance wanderers from all parts, who had come to witness the Easter celebration, and to hear the great organ of Haarlem.

Of all that worshipping crowd we shall particularize but two individuals, who knelt side by side, though chance alone had caused their propinquity, as they were perfect strangers to each other. One was far advanced in life, with phlegmatic, Dutch features, only redeemed from dulness by the acute expression of a quick, dark eye: he wore a burgher's dress, goodly enough, and carefully arranged. Beside him knelt the other—a man, whose age might have been within the middle cycle of life—from thirty to fifty. He had a dark, bronzed countenance, remarkable neither for beauty nor ugliness; hair, in which white streaks already had begun to mingle with the brown; and a stooping gait. His careless but not coarse attire, was travel-worn, and he worshipped like Jacob, “leaning on the top of his staff,” one which had evidently sustained the wayfarer's steps through many a weary journey. He rested his hands upon it as he knelt, leaned his head against them, and seemed absorbed in thought. His musings were hardly devotional, for he fixed his large soft eyes on vacancy, and his compressed lips did not move, though all around him were heard the murmuring orisons of his fellow-worshippers.

When the sacred host was raised, the stranger's open

eyes were still fixed upward; he declined not his head; his neighbour touched his elbow, whispering—

“My good friend, thou art absorbed! thou forgettest thy prayers.”

The other turned hastily round, looked at the old burgher's kindly face, and, with a murmured apology or acknowledgment, bent his head like the rest, until the holy emblem had passed by. When the service concluded, the old man said to his fellow-worshipper—

“I pray you pardon me for breaking in upon your thoughts just now; but it behoves all good Catholics to be doubly careful of every due rite, when these sinful doctrines of the man John Huss are abroad.”

“I am beholden to you,” answered the stranger, in a sweet, musical voice. It was the same which, years before, had rung with persuasive eloquence in the hall of Leipzig; had murmured its quiet words of concealed love at Hilda's side; had poured forth, in secret, its agony of wild despair. The stranger in the cathedral of Haarlem was Leuthold Auerbach.

Touched and interested—unconsciously, perhaps—by the melody of a voice that was irresistible, the old man, as they went out together, still continued the conversation.

“You seem a stranger here?”

“I entered Haarlem only yesterday.”

“And you were admiring our cathedral? Is it not beautiful?” said the old man, with some degree of pride.



"It is the fairest I have yet seen, and I have travelled far and wide, and have found no rest for my feet," continued Leuthold, musingly, while a sad look passed over his face, not unmarked by his companion.

"Forgive an old man's rudeness," said the Dutchman, kindly; "but you seem weary, my friend; and if you are a stranger, and have no home—no ties in Haarlem——"

"None in the wide world!"

"Why, then, come home and stay with me, while your affairs detain you here. Ours is a cheerful house; my Lucia will be sure to welcome her father's guest; and I have half-a-dozen grandchildren, who will strive to amuse you. You might fare worse than in the home of old Laurentius Coster."

Leuthold met this unexpected hospitality with the cordiality it merited.

"But, Herr Coster," he said, smiling, "are you not rather venturesome in thus welcoming a stranger to your house?"

"I know not who you may be, whether rich or poor, noble or peasant," answered the hearty burgher. "I only need look in your face to see you are a good man, and that is all I care for. You are most welcome, provided you are not one of those abominable heretics."

Leuthold drew a crucifix from his bosom.

"I am a good Catholic, I trust: as indeed you have already witnessed. I was once a student, and am still a humble follower of the learned sciences. My name is Leuthold Auerbach."

"Then welcome—thrice welcome!" cried Lauren-

tius, grasping him warmly by the hand. "My instinct was true! Sir, I am a simple, unlearned man myself, but I have been honoured with the friendship of many of the wise and good. Your name is known to me as that of one whom a prince might be proud to welcome to his palace. Thrice welcome to my home, Herr Auerbach!"

Leuthold's breast thrilled with pleasure. The yearning desire for human sympathy yet dwelt there, and ever sprang up at the lightest touch, a pure fountain of love for all mankind. He had said to himself when, after the desolation that fell upon him, his heart revived a little,—as a wayside plant crushed by a heavy stone, after a time begins to put forth its small green leaves from amidst the ruins—he had said, "I will be strong, I will be patient. The world is very wide. I will not mourn for the loss of one all-engrossing love; my heart shall not be frozen by this despair, but shall abound the more in pure, unselfish, universal love—in divine charity."

And so he had wandered far and wide, in desert places, and among men whose very existence was unknown to civilized Europe. He had gone from the learned priests of Rome to the wild mountaineers of Hungary, and then again to the scarcely less barbarian inhabitants of the nooks and corners of his own German land. He had journeyed from city to city, everywhere following on the track of misery with the footstep of an angel of peace, regarding his learning only as an instrument of doing good. To

the sick he was a physician; to the poor a comforter and adviser; to the guilty he spoke with a warning, yet pitying voice. When all these blessed him, when in their happiness he saw the fruit of his labours, then Leuthold remembered no more his own sorrow, but rejoiced that he was thus made an instrument of good on earth.

Laurentius and his guest took their way to the home of the former. As they went, Coster talked with the not unpleasing garrulousness of age; and Leuthold learned much of his new friend's early life. His father had been *custos* of the cathedral; and this office, after the fashion of those early times, had given to the family their surname. Laurentius recounted to his guest the passing incidents of a life whose course had been untroubled by any of those seasons of worldly care and mental suffering, which often stand as landmarks of bitterness in the history of finer moulded spirits. He had loved, in an easy, gentle, indifferent way; he had married, and outlived joy; he had lost his wife, and outlived sorrow. He spoke with a father's fondness of his only child, Lucia, who, with her husband and children, brightened his home in his old age.

"I have had a comfortable life, and have done as much good as my opportunities permitted," said the old man. "Last of all, I am content that my children should lay me in the shadow of the old cathedral towers, say a prayer for my soul, and forget me."

"And is this life? Is this all?" thought Leuthold,

while he listened. "Have I no higher existence than this?" And his inmost soul answered,—“Yes, thou hast the true life within thee!” He felt it, and was content. “Yet,” he murmured, “there is none on earth even to say the prayer of loving kindred for my soul’s repose.” But the inward voice replied,—“What matters it? if thou hast worked out thy mission on earth, thy good deeds, however secret, will be as thy soul’s children: who will yet rise up and bless their father.”

The dwelling of Laurentius Coster was situated on the shores of the lake of Haarlem, whose waters dashed up almost to the entrance, fertilizing a pleasant garden, which owed its beauty more to the hand of abundant Nature, than to the tasteful skill of its cultivator. The house was evidently occupied by a family whose wealth enabled them to consider luxury a necessity, inasmuch as the window of the large hall was of glass, while the other apertures for light were carefully covered with a thin wire-woven substance. Moreover, it had one tall chimney in the centre of the roof, above which the dense wood-smoke curled upwards, diffusing the pleasant odour of burning pine-faggots; and the roughness of the outer walls was concealed by festoons of ivy, which had been gracefully trained so as to cover the whole front of the low, one-storied dwelling.

Presently the garden rang with the welcoming shouts of a troop of children, who came bounding to meet their grandfather. The boys danced round him with innumerable greetings and inquiries about Easter-

gifts; while the eldest girl—a silent, demure-eyed little damsel of twelve years—quietly took away the old man's stick, and drew his arm through hers, making herself proud supporter of his steps.

“See what it is to be an old grandfather!” said Coster to Leuthold, who had hung back from the merry tribe of children. “Come, Lucia the Second,” he continued, addressing his granddaughter, “you must be mistress of the house in your mother's absence, and welcome my friend here, whom I have brought from Haarlem.”

The little maiden drooped her head, and cast down her eyes, half shyly, half with a childish coquetry; then, without lifting up her long eyelashes, she put her hand in Leuthold's, and said,—

“You are very welcome, and I hope you will stay a long time here.”

“That will I gladly,” answered Leuthold, as he stooped down and kissed the sweet, blushing face; and then, still holding Lucia's hand, he entered the house of Laurentius with a feeling of home-happiness long unknown to the lonely wanderer.

## CHAPTER VI.

"Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing leave behind us  
Footsteps on the sands of time,—  
Footprints that, perchance, another,  
Sailing o'er Life's troubled main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again."

LONGFELLOW.

WEEKS, months passed, and Leuthold of Leipsic still remained an honoured guest in the family of Laurentius Coster. There was a patriarchal simplicity therein which was most soothing to the spirit of the wanderer. The children loved him, for he became alternately their teacher and their playfellow; the mother—a worthy Dutch matron, to whom her home was her whole world—regarded him kindly, as a harmless, gentle personage, who ate little and spoke less; and the old man himself, after vainly trying to delight his own peculiar faculty of hero-worship by treating Leuthold with the cumbersome respect due to a great man, at last suffered him to remain unnoticed, and, unencumbered with the burden of his fame, nestle in the family nook as he best loved.

When Leuthold spoke of continuing his journeyings, it was with a lingering and almost sorrowful tone, which was echoed by all the family. John and Peter, the two elder boys, loudly protested against his departure; and little Lucia tearfully raised her soft dove's eyes, which had now learned

to peep from under their lashes, even in the presence of the great Herr Auerbach.

"Do you not love us, that you wish to go?" said the child, wistfully. "You know that we love you—I more than all. Why will you not stay?"

It is so sweet to hear the language of affection, even from a child. Leuthold's eyes grew dim, while he took the gentle pleader on his knee.

"You love me, dear child! Does any one then, love *me*?"

"After such a frank declaration from this young damsel, what more can you wish?" said the grandfather, merrily. "But come, Herr Auerbach, tell me whither you would go, and whom it is that you prefer to us? I thought you had no home-ties."

"I have no closer ties in the wide world than here," answered Leuthold. "It seems to be my fortune to drift through life like a chance sea-weed, and never find a resting-place. I have been happy here, and now I go forth to fulfil my wandering destiny."

"Thou shalt not go forth at all, my son," cried the old man, his tone of respect merging into that of affection. "Listen to what this little maiden says, and stay with us. If thou art too proud to be received as a brother in a household which is honoured by thy presence, at least thou wilt not refuse to aid in governing these wild boys, who ought to esteem it their greatest happiness to have been instructed by the learned doctor Leuthold Auerbach. Therefore stay, my son,—if I may call thee so."

Leuthold clasped the hand of Coster, and the compact was sealed, without a word, save Lucia's joyful exclamation—

“ Ah, now you will believe that we love you ! ”

And she sat down at his feet, looking up in his face with eyes that spoke more than her words—eyes in which a woman's soul was dawning through the unconscious innocence of the child.

“ Herr Auerbach,” said the eldest boy, after a long and whispered consultation, “ now you are one of the family, we must put your name among our list of carvings. How do you spell ‘ Leuthold ? ’ ”

His question being answered, the boy began to consult with his brothers.

“ An L and an H,” mused the younger, John ; “ they will be hard to cut. Grandfather, you must cut them for us, as you did in the tree.”

And he brought out a large box filled with letters of all sizes rudely carved in bark, some separately, others united in long strips, forming the names of the family.

“ Now you shall see how cleverly we can write without using a pen, and what a quantity we can do at a time,” said Peter. “ Come, dear master ! ” The “ good master,” or the “ dear master,” was Leuthold's appellation in the family.

The boy led him to a rude sort of press, and showed him how, by placing these blackened letters upon white paper, impressions were taken of the names of the household.



"We call this our printing," said the boy, proudly, as he noticed Leuthold's surprise and curiosity. "We have done all our own names, and you shall soon see yours write itself in the same way. Once we did a whole sentence—it was, *Ave Maria, ora pro nobis*: it looked so pretty."

"And who found out these curious playthings?" asked the "good master."

"It was our grandfather who cut the first letter for us to copy out of the bark of a beech-tree, as we were walking in the wood. Then Peter took an impression of it, and we saw how it would save the trouble of writing, and be much prettier. But you do not hear, good master," said the boy, as Leuthold sat musingly with the letters in his hand, apparently absorbed in deep reflection.

In the child's plaything the man of thought and far-seeing intellect perceived, though dimly, the origin of a mighty power, which in coming ages would sway the world to its centre. He saw how learning might be scattered far and wide—how the work of a lifetime might come to be transcribed in a day—and thus the blessing of knowledge be diffused to an extent of which he had never before dreamed. These possibilities, though vague, came upon the man of science with a force which he could feel, but not define. A sudden light flashed upon Leuthold, impelling him to work out the great idea which had arisen out of one of those strange accidents which we call chance, but which are destiny.

Laurentius Coster was one of those men who seem sent into the world, the unconscious instruments of some great good, yet who never dream of their mission, and accomplish it more through seeming fate than by the resolute agency of their own will. How little did the simple-minded old man imagine, when cutting out playthings for his grandchildren, that he was paving the way for the glorious footsteps of freedom, of science, of literature;—that the name which, in his unlearned humility, he deemed would soon be forgotten, was to be transmitted from generation to generation as that of the inventor of printing.

Leuthold Auerbach spent a long night of meditation, and then he sought Laurentius, and told him, with earnest enthusiasm, of what was passing in his mind. But the placid and rather phlegmatic Dutchman was perfectly unmoved. He could not believe that from a thing so trifling—a childish toy—should spring effects so great as Leuthold foretold. The master drew him to the window.

“Look,” he cried in his energy, “look at that noble tree, in whose branches the birds rest and the breezes play—it was once a small seed trodden under foot! But a hand found it, planted it, and behold it now! So is the beginning of every new science; it is discovered—a tiny seed, planted, sometimes intentionally, sometimes by what men foolishly call “chance;” it takes root and grows, and none can hinder it. Remember that a few grains of sand acci-

dentally mingled and thrown into the fire by a careless workman's hand produced the clear, beautiful substance now forming your window; and who knows where the marvels of this art of glass-making may end? It makes things distinct to the eye like a new sense. Perchance, one day through it we may behold the far-off mysteries of the stars. And so it will be with this discovery of thine, Laurentius."

"Thou art sanguine, dear Leuthold," said the old man, with a half-incredulous but gentle smile, as he listened to the excited tones of his friend. "What good dost thou imagine this printing will produce?"

"Hast thou never considered that it will multiply writing without end?—that those rare and precious works which it takes a man's life to copy may be made no longer the sole luxury of the rich?—that the same power by which these children print a name or a prayer could be made to produce a whole volume? Oh, Laurentius, if thou couldst see into the future as I do—see thy name emblazoned by fame—see thy children honoured, and, above all, see the good which thou hast left behind on earth! How blessed such a life must be!"

Coster, moved and touched by the earnestness of Leuthold, seemed more than half convinced.

"Well, dear master, what dost thou wish me to do for the furtherance of this great end? I will do all for thy sake."

"Not for mine, but thine own—or, rather for the

sake of the whole world!" cried the enthusiastic philosopher.

And then he explained to his surprised and wondering hearer various plans which the ingenuity of a man of science could make applicable to the new invention.

"It is strange—it is wonderful!" said Laurentius, musing, as improvements which had never struck him before were suggested by the master; and slowly the idea began to dawn upon the good Fleming that this passing amusement of his might indeed turn out a wonderful discovery. He was like a man who had picked up a pebble, which some hand more skilful than his own had polished, and found therein a precious gem. Yet, like the same self-gratified seeker, he never remembered that he had only found it as a common stone, and that, for all he knew of its value, it might have remained a common stone for ever, had not a wiser head than his own brought the treasure to light.

Laurentius gave himself up to delight and pride. He was at last convinced of the after-success of his discovery, and as it steadily advanced, owing to the skilful wisdom of Leuthold, the learned of Haarlem began to see it too. Coster was now honoured as the inventor of a marvellous art, and men began to talk of him as the honest burgher had never been talked of before. When the first rudely-printed book appeared, the joy of the old man knew no bounds. He looked at it, turned over and over again the coarsely-formed

but still legible pages, until his aged eyes swam with tears.

“Can it be I—I, Laurentius Coster, who have done all this,—who have found out what seems like magic?” cried he.

And then he embraced his daughter, and took his grandchildren on his knee, making them spell it over letter by letter.

“My boys, my dear John and Peter,” he said, “I am old: I shall not live to rejoice in the work of my hands; but you will see it. Yes, my children, you will not forget your old grandfather when he is gone—the world will not suffer you. Ah, me! to think that my poor name should indeed be remembered for ages as having done all this! Children, you will one day be proud that you are descended from Laurentius Coster.”

“Grandfather,” murmured Lucia, “you are so happy with us that you forget Leuthold. See how silent and grave he stands.”

“Ah, yes! come here, my dear Leuthold—my good friend,” cried the old man, whose heart was opened to the whole world. “You were the first to tell me what I had done, and you shall not be forgotten. You shall share my fortune with these children, and be a rich man all your life!”

Leuthold smiled, with a gentle negative motion of the head; he then complained of weariness, and retired. In his solitude he sat, and pondered over thoughts half-pleasing, half-sad.

"It is even so," mused he. "I have laboured, and others will reap the fruit of my labours. This old man's name will be honoured, while mine will be mentioned no more. I shall pass away like a wandering breeze, or like a breaking wave. Yet what matters it? The winged breeze has left behind it a precious seed—the wave has wafted a pearl ashore. The work of both is done."

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## CHAPTER VII.

"He stood beside me,  
The embodied image of the brightest dream,  
That like a dawn heralds the day of life.  
The shadow of his presence made my world  
A Paradise. All familiar things he touched,  
All common words he spake, became to me  
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world."

SHELLEY.

THE poets liken life to a hurrying river—a journey swift, and yet weary—a changing day. They call Time an enemy, a destroyer: at times a beloved friend, but that is only in the bitter irony of sorrow. The fact is, that passing Life and changing Time are only outward show. The true souls who walk the earth,—and there are many, thank God! whatever cold-hearted sceptics may say of humanity—never really change, nor grow old. They only ripen in wisdom and in all good things, and become more fit for the heavenly harvest. In those who are of a com-

moner mould, the wearing body weighs down the mind, and the heart grows old with the frame; but the true angel-spirits are ever young.

Thus Leuthold Auerbach, when the ominous shadow of forty years was nigh overtaking him, was as young in heart as he had been at twenty-five. His eye yet brightened at the sight of all beautiful things; his voice had its old gentle tone; and though his figure was bent still lower, and Time, the enemy, had laid his hand on the noble forehead and clustering hair, until every curve of the finely-formed head was bare to the eye of the observer, still Leuthold Auerbach was not an old man. Nature, ever even-handed, sometimes atones to those whose want of beauty makes them look old in youth, by tenderly keeping off the harsher tokens of age. Had the Self-seer exercised his gift, now long unused, he would have marvelled that fifteen years should have passed over him and left so few traces behind.

The "good master"—he still kept that name—sat one day with his pupils, now growing into manhood. John and Peter were busily engaged in carving types, for all the secrets of his invention were wisely kept by Laurentius within his own family. They were the sole depositaries of the first mysteries of printing, except a servant, Geinsfleicht, who afterwards carried the secret with him to Mentz, and there promulgated it as his own discovery. The old man wandered up and down the room: now looking over the young workmen, now giving orders to his servant, who was

busy with the press, and then glancing with pride and pleasure to the various testimonies of his success that adorned the room, in the shape of printed leaves.

"'Tis useless, grandfather," at last cried John, throwing down his block, "I cannot cut these letters; and as I am the best workman here, no one else can. You must get some wood-carver, and run the chance of his keeping our secret. I will be troubled no longer."

"Ah, you were ever an impatient boy," said the grandfather, shaking his head in despair. "Leuthold, dear master, what shall we do?"

"The boy speaks wisely, though he meant it not," answered Leuthold. "The work is beyond his skill—it requires an experienced hand."

"And whom among the carvers in Haarlem can we trust?—they are a wild, unprincipled set, who would steal our secret and fly. Come, Lucia," he continued, as the door opened, and a young girl entered, "thou hast more sense than either of thy brothers; tell us how we are to get this work finished, which John has so angrily given up?"

Lucia raised her eyes with the same look which was peculiar to her in childhood: all else was changed with her. The round, chubby features had become more regular; the form had reached the full height of womanhood; childish prettiness was merged into beauty—beauty rendered still more loveable by the mind that shone through it. Lucia at seventeen was, indeed, the perfection of girlhood; thoughtful, serene, yet with a world of feeling that almost amounted to



passion, slumbering in the deep blue eyes, in the tremulous lips.

"I do not wonder that John could not carve this delicate work," she said.

"Ay, that is the thing! and whom can we trust, my child? A first-rate carver would refuse the task, and of those wild young men that Peter brings here, there is not one who is honest."

"Yes, grandfather, there is," answered the girl. "No one can speak evil of George Surlan, the wood-carver from Ulm."

"What! merry George, the Master-singer, who steals away old hearts and young with his laughing eyes and his gay ditties?"

"He is good as well as merry, grandfather. I am sure you might trust him. And he is a favourite of the master's, too," said Lucia, for the first time lifting her eyes to Leuthold's face.

The two boys burst into a loud laugh.

"You like George because he took your head as a model for one of his carved angels, sister. How vain girls are!" cried John, maliciously.

Lucia glanced towards the master, whose penetrating gaze was fixed on her countenance. She saw it, and blushed deeply.

"It is not so, indeed!" she murmured. "You must not think so ill of me." And she suddenly took Leuthold's hand with a child-like air, as if deprecating reproach.

"Lucia is never vain," said Leuthold, gently, as he

drew her towards him with the frank familiarity which ever marked his intercourse with the whole family, and smoothed her beautiful fair hair, as a father or elder brother might have done. It was a token of regard that was customary between them; and yet Lucia seemed to tremble and change colour, even while a smile of radiant happiness hovered round her lips.

"Merry George might have known we were talking about him," cried John, who had taken refuge at the window, in a sullen fit. "Look, there he is, coming hither! Now, grandfather, you can put him in my place, as Lucia answers for his honesty so boldly."

"What shall we do, good friend?" said the old man, irresolutely, turning to Leuthold, who was, though Laurentius never suspected the fact, the ruler of all his actions, having over him the inevitable influence of a strong mind over a weak one.

"I think," said the master, "that George would answer thy purpose, Laurentius. Lucia has spoken truly; he is a clever and honest youth, the son of a worthy father, whom I once knew well. Thou mayst indeed trust him."

"The master is always right. I will go and fetch George hither," said Peter; and meeting no opposition, he departed.

Presently George Surlan entered. He was a youth slenderly and gracefully formed, which caused him to look much younger than he really was. His dress was that of a student, but light and gay, and he wore on his shoulder a sort of badge, being a rude representation of

King David playing the harp. This was the distinctive mark of the order of Master-singers, a brotherhood which rose up in Germany after the Minne-singers had passed away, and which united the musical character of the latter with many rules and rites approaching to masonic. To this fraternity of minstrels, which included men of all ranks, and was at one time almost universal over Germany, the young wood-carver belonged.

The Master-singer lifted his cap from his fair curls, and looked with much surprise round the room, which was, according to report, the scene of Coster's mysterious and secret labours. He made a respectful reverence to the old man, and to Leuthold, and then, as his quick eye caught that of the young maiden, it brightened with pleasure.

"They tell me you are a true upright youth, as well as a good carver," abruptly began Laurentius. "I have sent for you to aid us, George Surlan, and I am going to trust you with a great secret. Herr Auerbach says I may."

The young man looked gratefully towards the master, and replied—

"He shall have no cause to repent his goodness. What can I do?"

And thereupon Laurentius began, in a long harangue, to explain the necessity of secrecy, and the solemn promise that he would be expected to make regarding the work he was to do. The Master-singer listened rather impatiently; but Leuthold took advantage of a pause in the discourse to explain all succinctly.

"Thou must promise to keep the secret, and I know thou didst never fail in thy word. I answer for thee, and so does this child it seems," said Leuthold, smiling at Lucia.

"Then I will engage to do anything in the wide world," cried George Surlan, earnestly, clasping the master's hand, though his beaming eyes sought the sweet face of Lucia.

She answered him with a frank and kindly smile; but she did not droop her long lashes—she did not blush. Alas! while the young man's whole soul was laid at her feet—while he watched her every movement with the lingering fondness that only springs from love, she looked carelessly on him, unconscious of the treasure thus thrown away. To the dreaming maiden, wholly absorbed in her inner world of romance, there was but one on earth who appeared noble, wise, worthy to be the ideal of girlhood's wildest devotion. That one was Leuthold Auerbach.

Woman's love is far more spiritualized than man's, inasmuch as it is often entirely independent of outward beauty. A true-hearted woman's nature is full of the quality called hero-worship, and this, mingled with the all-pervading necessity of loving, causes her to be swayed irresistibly by the power of superior intellect. How many a fanciful girl has lavished a world of fondness upon some poet-idol, whom perhaps her eyes have never beheld, and whom yet she regards with a vague adoration, which, though only ideal, needs but a touch to exalt it into the intensity of human

love! How often, too, do we see some beautiful and high-minded woman pour out the whole riches of her affection upon one to whom Nature has given nothing but the great spell to win it all—a noble soul! She passes over all external disadvantages of age or person. She sees but the immortal spirit dwelling therein; and it is ever beautiful, ever young. Her soul is bowed down before it in joyful humility; and where she worships she loves too, with an earnestness, intensity, and purity, which shadow dimly forth that which the angels bear to Divinity itself.

Therefore let it not be thought strange if Leuthold had thus unconsciously awakened such deep and absorbing feelings in the heart of a young girl like Lucia. The world scoffs at the romance of girlhood. Nay, women themselves, grown sedate and matronly, come in time to look back deridingly on themselves, and say how young and foolish they were once. And yet this first fresh dream is one of the few realities of life, not the less vivid and true because we outgrow it in time. Others treading after us, again pass through that sunny region, and when we turn and see them with their innocent romance and their single-hearted trust, we remember our own old days, and think that there was some truth in those dreams after all.

Sweet, maidenly, and yet high-souled Lucia, with the heart of a woman and the spirit of a child, our eyes grow dim while we picture thee: how thou didst grow up like a pure lily among meaner flowers, and feel

gradually the carelessness of childhood merge into the dreams of girlhood ; how thou didst love to sit alone, to trace dim regions in cloudland, to listen to invisible music in the wind, to watch the stars, until they seemed mysterious eyes looking down on thee, while vague feelings of delicious sadness stole over thee, and thy tears flowed, though not for sorrow ! Poor child ! who didst ask of the winds, the clouds, the stars, what was the strange power that so moved thee, and understoodest not the answer that they bore,—“ Maiden, it is Love ! ”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

“ Love is sweet,  
Given or returned.”—SHELLEY.

THE story of love is everywhere the same. Why should we enlarge on the passing daily events in this Flemish home of four hundred years ago ? Human hearts beat now as they did then, and are alike swayed by doubts, and fears, and hopes, with love reigning above all. Thou, youth of modern days, sighing in vain for some cold-hearted damsel ; thou, dreaming maiden, who worshippest one above all, calling this feeling respect, admiration—anything but love ; and thou, calm philosopher, who hast suffered and found peace, and art no more of the world,—ye may see in these visions of the past but the reflex of your own selves.

Day after day glided on, and all was outward calm in the dwelling of Laurentius Coster. The young Master-singer became an inmate of the family, and all were glad of this. George Surlan brought sunshine wherever he went, with his blithe spirit and kindly heart. He was not one of your moody, sentimental lovers, always sighing and pining; still less was he addicted to those fantastic moods which modern poetry has made so interesting, ever changing from gloomy misanthropy to hollow mirth. Though he loved Lucia as the apple of his eye, and though as yet he loved in vain, still he did not lose hope. It was his happiness to be near her, to render her all those kindly offices which brothers scorn. When she walked through her well-tended garden and received the daily gift of flowers, or found all sorts of beautifully carved ornaments in her room, as if by magic, Lucia thanked her friend with a pleasant smile, never dreaming in her innocence of the love he bore her. Poor George! he tried to be contented with such a light guerdon, and consoled himself with the thought that perhaps Lucia was too young to love any one, and a still untouched heart might surely be won in time; but, after a season, he learned how vain was that comfort. Thus it chanced that the discovery came.

Usually, in the long winter evenings, the family gathered together in the large hall. Very solemn these meetings had used to be, while Laurentius held forth to the sleepy children on the events of his young days, intermingled with horrible modern stories of the

deeds of Ziska and John Huss, whose histories had reached the good city of Haarlem with all the embellishments of a fairy tale. When Leuthold came, these stories were discontinued, and, in their stead, the master's low sweet voice might be heard, telling various tales learned in his journeyings far and wide, of good deeds done in humble homes, of noble heroism that the world knew not, of suffering endured and wrong overcome—all that could lead young spirits onward in the right path. At such times the little Lucia always sat at Leuthold's feet, with his hand resting on her curls; and, as she grew older, she still kept her place beside him. But the soft eyes were less often raised to his face, and she usually listened in silence, her fingers busied with some piece of maiden's work. Now and then, when Leuthold turned and saw her thus, a vision of the long-vanished past flitted across his mind; but when, at a sudden pause in the tale, he saw the enthusiastic girl listening with clasped hands and heaving breast, the passing fancy vanished. Lucia was not the calm, reserved Hilda. More beautiful—perchance, more winning: but unlike that ideal of his youth's love.

When, alternating with Leuthold's stories, came the fantastic lays of the young Master-singer, Lucia at first did not like the change; but gradually, as the musician's own feelings deepened, his songs took a serious tone. His mirthful ditties were transformed into the breathings of love, a lore new as pleasant to the maiden; for Leuthold, in all his histories, never touched on that one subject. How could he? So while the minstrel poured



out his feelings under a thin veil, his strains touched Lucia, and she listened with an intense interest, which gave new inspiration to the Master-singer.

One night George sang an old German tale :—

“ There was once a young princess, whom many kings and knights wooed. It was in the ancient times of Scandinavian warfare, when the strongest arm and the fiercest spirit were highest esteemed by men. Some of her suitors brought precious furs, and laid them at her feet in token of their prowess in the chase; others came in their bright ringing armour, and showed her treasures of gold; and a few cast before her, with fierce looks, the heads of slain enemies, to be the foot-stool of a conqueror's bride. But when the maiden turned away from all, their love grew into anger, and they all joined in hate towards the king her father, and would have driven him from his throne. Then there stood before the crownless king a counsellor of whom no one had dreamed,—a poor and wise man, who had dwelt in the palace all his days unnoticed and uncared for, and he said to the monarch,—

“ ‘ My hand is feeble, and has never grasped a spear, yet I can tell the stars in their courses. My voice is low, it has never been heard in battle, yet it can teach men wisdom. My body is frail, but I have strength in my soul. Let me go forth among thy people, and teach them how to overcome the might of the enemy.’

“ Then the wise man went forth, and his words were like thunders, and he ruled the hearts of men

at his will, until the foe was conquered and the land was at rest. The king said unto him,—

“ ‘Thou shalt have the reward which is greatest of all ; thou shalt be my son, O poor wise man !’

“ But the other answered,—

“ ‘How can it be ? I am lowly in form ; my youth is gone by ; I have neither strength to fight, nor beauty to win love. The princess will not cast her eyes on me.’

“ And he looked sorrowfully to where the throned maiden sat in her loveliness, as one would look at the sphered moon, in hopeless adoration. Then the princess came down from her seat ; her breast heaved, her cheek burned, but it was not with pride ; and she said softly to him,—

“ ‘Thou art very wise, but thou knowest not the secrets of a woman’s heart. When the strong men came and laid their tributes before me, I thought of a voice that had taught me in my childhood ; and I turned from them as from the warring beasts of the field. When the noble and beautiful bent before me, a face was in my sight more dear than all. Dost thou know my heart now ?’ And when he gazed, dumb and pale as death with overpowering joy, the maiden laid her arms round his neck and whispered, ‘Let me love thee, thou noblest of all. If thou art poor, I will be thy riches ; if thou art growing old, I will bring back thy youth. To me thou art all fair, all young ; thou art my glory, my delight, my pride !’ ”

The minstrel paused in his song, and glanced at

Lucia. She sat—her head bent forward, her quivering lips pale with emotion, and her eyes fixed with a look full of the deepest and most adoring love—not, alas! on him who sang, but—on Leuthold! In another moment she had burst into tears, and fled from the room.

“Thou shouldst not sing such doleful ballads to poor simple maidens, George,” said Laurentius, reproachfully. “Doubtless the child was terrified at thy horrible tales of war and battle and human heads as footstools. ’T is very wrong; is it not, Leuthold?”

The master lifted up his head; he, too, had listened with a moved heart to the tale of love—it had spoken to him of the long-buried, mournful past. George Surlan noticed that his face was paler than ordinary, and that tears glistened on his eyelashes. The young lover’s bosom was rent with jealousy. He dashed his instrument to the floor, and went out into the garden.

“Now that boy is angry, too,” querulously cried old Laurentius. “What must be done with these wild young spirits? Go after him, dear Leuthold, and bring him hither again.”

But George would not come. The master found him walking hastily by the side of the lake. His anger had passed away, but was succeeded by sadness. It sat strangely enough on that bright face, hitherto full of the unclouded gaiety of youth. Leuthold was touched to the heart: in a moment he penetrated the young man’s love-secret; and his tone, which he had

meant to make calm and severe, now grew gentle and almost tremulous in its sympathy.

"What ails thee, George?" he said, laying his hand on the Master-singer's arm. "Why wert thou angry, and why art thou now so sad?"

"It is nothing—nothing! Let me alone!" and George turned away angrily; but he met the calm, earnest eyes of Leuthold, and the storm was lulled. "Leave me, good master; I will return to the house soon."

But Leuthold still kept his hold, and spoke gently and gravely,—

"George Surlan, when I stood by thy father's death-bed at Ulm, he prayed me to watch over thee, and told thee always to listen to my words. Dear George, wilt thou hear me, when I tell thee what I read in thy heart now?"

The brow of the Master-singer crimsoned, but he said nothing. Leuthold went on:—

"Thou hast a secret there. Thou art wroth at the careless words of Laurentius, because thou lovest our sweet Lucia."

"Our sweet Lucia!" repeated the young man, bitterly. "Yes, I do love Lucia—thy Lucia!"

"I have thought so—I have wished so—and I am sure she loves thee," answered Leuthold, unconscious of the other's meaning.

"Thou art very ~~gentle~~, master. Why art thou so certain of the ~~maiden's heart~~?"

"Does she not always smile upon thee? Did she

not weep at thy song? I saw not her face, but I knew it was so. Surely she loves thee, George?"

"Oh, dear master, have pity on me; thou wilt drive me mad!" cried the other, impetuously. "Thou wert ever kind; why dost thou taunt me thus? Lucia loves me not, and thou knowest it too well."

"Nay! Whom but thee could this timid maiden love, who has been brought up like a young bird in its hidden nest?"

"Thee—thee, Leuthold Auerbach. Lucia loves thee!"

The red blood rushed to the master's face, and then faded away into a mournful smile.

"Thou art dreaming, poor boy!" he said, gently. "Throughout life I have never known the blessing of woman's love: it was not for me! and now that I am growing old, that this fair blooming child should love one like me—seest thou not it is impossible?"

George looked amazed.

"And can it be that thou knewest it not?—that thou dost not love her?"

"I love my sweet pupil, who has been unto me like a young sister—a daughter! I never had a dream so wild as this."

"Then thou lovest another, or thou hast loved. Tell me all, dear master," eagerly cried the young man. But he imagined not the effect his words would produce on Leuthold, who staggered as if struck by a sudden blow, and leaned against a tree for support. George Surlan, terrified and awed, could not utter

a word. At last the master said slowly, and with effort,—

“Speak of this no more. Let it vanish alike from thy memory and from thy tongue. It is a secret between my own heart and God. Now leave me.”

The young musician, deeply touched, pressed his hand and departed. Leuthold stood alone by the shore of the gloomy lake. A thick mist had crept over it; the chill penetrated every fibre of his slight, delicate frame, but he felt it not. The long-slumbering feelings of human passion had once more awoke in him, and he trembled beneath their power. His soul was an autumn tree, through whose boughs the same breezes which had once only produced pleasant music, now pass,—tearing to the earth the same leaves with which they had erst harmlessly played. The ideal of love which he had vainly set up in youth again revived in Leuthold's spirit. Not that another filled the place of Hilda, but his soul thrilled to the sweetness of being for the first time the object of woman's love.

The words of George Surlan, “Lucia loves thee—only thee,” rang in the ears of Leuthold with a strange melody. He began to think over the words, the looks of the young maiden, since she had grown from childhood unto girlhood; her unvarying tenderness; her silent attention to all his comforts, even to the commonest things; her care for all things he loved; the deep sympathy, mingled with reverence, with which she strove to teach her own mind to follow his in its

wildest flights. All these things dawned upon him in a new light, with a sweetness of which he was himself hardly conscious.

Oh, ye lonely-hearted ones, into whose darkness has suddenly broken a cheering ray—on whom the unlooked-for sense of being loved has stolen like a pleasant perfume in the desert—deem him not faithless to the one only true love that the human heart can feel! Scorn him not, if in Leuthold's dreams that night the bitter memories of the past grew less keen; that the forms of Hilda, the hopelessly beloved one, and of Lucia, the young, devoted dreamer, mingled into one.

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CHAPTER IX.

“ To suffer woes that Hope thinks infinite,  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night,  
To love and bear, to hope till Hope create  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates,—  
This is thy glory!”

SHELLEY.

LONG ere the twilight of a winter morning dawned, Leuthold arose, and, lighting his lamp, strove to banish by study the wayward fantasies of the night. But it was in vain. A haunting spirit had been raised within him which no such power could lay. His thoughts turned still to that hope of Lucia's love which had so suddenly risen up in his imagination. To drive it

away he thought of himself—of the twenty years' barrier between that fair young maiden and the man over whom time and sorrow had laid such a heavy hand. But still the moaning wind seemed to breathe, in Lucia's voice, the words of that old lay—"Let me love thee, and I will bring back thy youth."

Again, as in a time long gone by, there came to Leuthold the wild yearning to behold himself—to exercise the strange gift which had once so strongly influenced his life. The angel of his destiny seemed once more near him, and thoughts and feelings deadened during his life of action in the world without, again thronged upon the mind of the dreamer. The Self-seer felt upon him the warning of his coming power.

"O thou Ruler of my fate!" cried Leuthold, "thou readest my heart—all its weakness, all its strength. Thou seest that it is not through vain desire or selfish pride that I seek to know myself as I am. It might be that my desolate heart would be gladdened and grow young in the sunshine of woman's love; a wife's hand might smooth away the furrows of this brow; children's kisses bring back the roses of these pale lips; I might yet live the life I pictured in youth's dreams, and die at peace in my own household! But if not, oh, let me understand my own spirit, and do that which is right in the sight of the Spirit who governs all."

As the Self-seer, in the earnestness of his concentrated soul, prayed thus, the lamp died away and his chamber grew dark. The wind rose, and the waves of



the lake under his window gave forth a hollow murmur which lulled his senses. Gradually torpor oppressed him, and he felt no more, until in the misty daylight the divided soul beheld its other Self, wrapped in the peaceful, child-like repose, into which Leuthold had sunk when the spell came upon him.

Once more, after a lapse of time which on earth would be numbered as the fourth of a man's life, the shadowy Essence looked upon its bodily form—the immortal and unchangeable spirit beheld what was perishable as the flowers of the field. Even as we view a fading garment did the Presence look upon the lineaments of its earthly being. The face was not yet disfigured by age, because evil passions had never stained it; but the freshness of youth was not there. Even greater than the tokens of natural decay were the signs of quick-coming decline produced by the restlessness of the ever-active mind. When once age came it would not be with slow crawl, but with lightning footstep.

As the low red sunbeam fell on his face, Leuthold awoke. The Shadow followed him as he descended to the general hall. His step grew firm, and a brightness was in his eye that resembled the student of Leipsic in years gone by. George Surlan met the master, with a silent, expressive grasp of the hand, and an affectionate, inquiring gaze; but as Leuthold, with a passing answer, turned away from him, the Phantom read in his troubled air the conflict that had already begun in that soul, hitherto so calm, so

clear; and a painful thrill quivered through its pure and spiritual being.

When Lucia, timidly, and yet with inconceivable tenderness, took the master's hand, she was startled by the earnestness of his look. It betrayed a sudden awakening to the power of her beauty, a something of passion for the woman mingled with affection towards the child. That day she did not linger at her place by Leuthold's side, but went away to the farthest nook, though she felt that his eyes followed her even there. The Spirit saw it too, and mourned that its bodily eyes could no longer meet those of the young wood-carver, who plied his work in silence and hopeless pain.

As the day advanced Leuthold grew more restless. He went to the shore of the lake and wandered about, sometimes idly watching the dusky clouds that careered over the sky in the majesty of winter's storms, and then again walking with his eyes cast down in deep meditation. The Spirit hovered over him, and listened to the voice within his soul, and which cried louder the more it was suppressed.

"My heart is still young," Leuthold murmured, "though my years are gathering fast behind me. What matters that? If Lucia loves me, why should I count my years? But then her love is the love of a child; will it endure, when my frame is shattered and my mind enfeebled, while she is still blooming and fair? Shall I clasp her to me, then, with chilling fetters of duty, when the romance of love has of necessity died

out—when I am old and she is young—bound together like the living and the dead? Would this be a meet return for her love? No, such love is not for me; I will forget the dream.”

But while he endeavoured to grow firm, the Shadow saw that the struggle threw the feebleness of added years over Leuthold's frame. Again he spoke, but only in his heart; his lips were dumb.

“I am sinful; I think only of myself, and remember not him who struggles with hopeless love. Shame! that I should dream of piercing another's breast with the same arrow that almost drank the life-blood of my own! And yet, if Lucia loves me——. But I will think no more.”

And Leuthold with a troubled eye gazed over the dark lake, whose tossing waves seemed restless as his own spirit. A little boat, in which he often loved to glide over its surface, lay fastened to the willows at his feet, heaving idly to and fro. An irresistible desire made him enter it, and he was soon skimming over the wide lake alone. The ever-attendant Shadow beheld his face as he sat watching the waves, which grew higher and whiter, until the tiny vessel danced upon them like a feather. The clouds thickened, and their gloom was reflected in Leuthold's countenance. Its expression was that of passionless, hopeless desolation, mingled with a stern will, that seemed to set the elements themselves at defiance. Darker and darker grew the waves, the wintry night came down, and the lake boiled like a caldron. The boat was drifted, Leuthold

knew not whither, but still he sat immoveable; he heard voices uttering his name, but he thought they were only the spirits of the tempest calling him on to death. At last a wave rose; it curled higher, higher; it broke, and the little boat went down.

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When Leuthold awoke to life he found himself in his own chamber, with kind and well-known faces bending over him. One, dearest and kindest of all, seemed to him like an angel from the world beyond the grave. He lifted his heavy eyelids and closed them again, but not before a cry of joy had rung in his ears: it was the voice of Lucia.

"He lives! he lives! Leuthold! *my* Leuthold!" she murmured; and, half-dreaming as he was, the master felt her warm tears falling one after the other on his hand—on his brow.

"Lucia! *my* Lucia!" he was about to echo; when he heard a heavy sigh, and saw in the face of George Surlan the most agonised despair. At once the knowledge of all he had learned in his double existence came upon the Self-seer, and with it rushed back memories of his own youth. The noble heart which had suffered so much, refused to inflict on that of another a like pang. The moment passed by, and the victory was won—won, before he learned, as he did soon after, that he had been near the horrible death of drowning—that it was George Surlan who saved him.

During the long days and weeks of sickness that succeeded, that sweet, loving face was continually

hovering near him. He knew that one word of his would awaken Lucia to the full consciousness of feelings now scarce developed, would enrich him with the whole treasure of her young love. Yet he never breathed that word. He pondered how he might cause the dream of girlhood to remain a dream for ever, nor deepen into the intensity of woman's love.

One day, as they sat alone together, Leuthold said to the maiden, who had been lavishing on him various gentle offices, now continued more through habit than necessity,—

"Thou art a tender nurse, Lucia,—almost like a grown woman, as thou wilt be soon, dear child. And yet it seems but a day since I came hither, and the little girl bade me welcome so shyly. How pleasant it has been for me to find a home so full of love!"

"Was that love new to thee, good master?" answered the girl. "Did not every one love thee as we?"

A deep sadness overspread Leuthold's face.

"Dear child," he said, "there is in every heart some hidden sorrow. I have never spoken of my youth, because there fell on it a dark shadow that will never pass away."

"Thou hast told me of thy mother—of her death."

"There are griefs worse than death, Lucia."

The girl's lips trembled, and she turned away her face as she said,—

"There is a sorrow of which I have heard in old tales—of which George sings—the sorrow of love."

"Even so," returned Leuthold; and his voice sunk

almost inaudibly, as if he were talking to himself rather than to her. "I loved; for years this love was the dream of my boyhood, the strength of my manhood, my hope, my joy, my very life,—and it was in vain."

"Did she die?" asked Lucia, in tones as low as his own.

"Yes, to me; for she loved me not. Therefore has my life been lonely, and will be to the end."

"Not so!" tremblingly murmured Lucia. "A change may come. Thou mayst yet find some true loving heart which will be precious in thy sight."

"Lucia," answered the master, "there are two kinds of love,—the early dream of fancy, which passes away like morning dew; and the deep, earnest passion, strengthened year after year until it has become one with life itself—which can never change. As I have lived, so I shall die, true to that lost, yet most precious love of old."

Leuthold had nerved himself thus far; he had, with desperate calmness, laid bare his heart, and the secret of his life had for the first time passed his lips. He could say no more; he covered his face with his hands, and leaned back exhausted. He did not see—perhaps it was well he did not—the changes in Lucia's face. She grew deadly pale, and pressed her hand upon her heart, as though there was a sharp pain there. In that moment her girlish air-palace crumbled into dust, the bubble burst, the dream was gone! Womanly dignity, not unmixed with shame, came to give her

strength; and when she again looked up, her whole mien was changed.

“I thank thee, dear master, for thus trusting me, though I am only a child. The tale of thy sorrows shall never pass my lips.”

“Be it so, dear Lucia,” the master answered, in a faint tone. “Only let it rest in thy memory; and when, in thy coming years of womanhood, a true heart lays at thy feet its whole wealth of love, cast it not from thee. Now, my child, leave me, for I am weary and sad, and I would fain rest awhile.”

Lucia rose, and silently arranged the cushions of his chair, as she had done since his sickness. She looked one moment with intense love on the pale, sunken face that lay back with closed eyes on the pillow, and said, softly,—

“The Virgin and all good saints comfort thee, my friend, my teacher, my more than father!”

Leuthold felt her warm lips rest for a moment on his forehead, like the kiss of a spirit in his dreams, and Lucia was gone.

It was, though she knew it not, the last farewell on earth between these twain. At the dawn of morning Leuthold went forth, for the second time, a wanderer over the wide world. Old Laurentius heard;—talked of the ingratitude of man, and trembled for his precious secret; Lucia wept over the sorrow-worn spirit which could nowhere find rest; but George knew the truth, and remembered, with almost adoring reverence, the self-denying man who, in the midst of his own darkness, had made the path of others bright.

## CHAPTER X.

“ The wiser mind  
Mourns less for what age takes away  
Than what it leaves behind.

“ My days, my friend, are almost gone ;  
My life has been approved,  
And many love me : but by none  
Am I enough beloved.”

WORDSWORTH.

GOOD reader, if thou lovest tales of deep mystery and exciting adventure, truly this is but a Barmecide's feast for thee ! I have led thee along through the straight path of human life without any turnings or windings ; thou hast had not a single maze of mystery to lose thyself in ; not one precipice of horrible doubt to whose brink thou goest smiling, knowing well that thou wilt not be suffered to fall ; I have not left thee to grope thy way in darkness through terrible scenes of sorrow, which are to end in a sudden burst of light ; nor have I deluded thee with sunshine, until thou camest to the mouth of a cavern of eternal gloom. To drop the metaphor, this is a plain story of life ; but more of the inner life of the heart, than the visible existence of man. And such are the truest and the deepest of all ; for there is no romance of outward worldly fortunes like the history of the heart.

Therefore, reader, if thou lovest such, if thou hast gone thus far with me, and, perchance, on the way, some world-wide chords have been touched, which have



found an echo in thine own heart, journey with me to the end.

Let us again pass unchronicled some years in Leuthold's life, and look upon him once more. He was returning from long wandering abroad, to his native Germany. Yes! the bent old man, with his thin gray hair and feeble steps, slow and tremulous in spite of the staff he held, was, indeed, the same Leuthold Auerbach, once the young student of Leipsic. He walked along like a man who had no care to hasten his journey, inasmuch as it led to no home. One always knows those happy travellers who have a place in view, towards which their steps are tending; they look different from the wayside loiterers, to whom all the world is the same.

As Leuthold journeyed, he stayed now and then to look at the bright summer sky and pleasant country around him, or to listen to the birds. At such times his eye lighted up with a spark of its olden fire. He had not lost all the blessed feelings of youth, his heart had not grown old, for he still loved and worshipped the beautiful in all things.

While he rested, the gay carol of a young man's voice reached his ear. It came nearer and nearer, and at last the singer emerged from a winding in the road. He seemed one of the race of wandering students so well known in Germany. His cap was set on his head with a careless jauntiness; his small bundle swung over his shoulder at the end of a stick; in his frank, handsome face, might be read youth, health, a light heart,

and a gay temper; and his joyous ditty gave full confirmation of the same.

Leuthold watched him approach; and as the other perceived his fellow-traveller he stopped his song, doffing his cap with the instinctive respect of youth to age, which always betokens a good heart.

"Thou art very merry, my young friend," said Leuthold, smiling. "Pray do not cease that pleasant song. It does one good to hear it."

"Thanks, kind sir," answered the young man. "I assure you it does me good to sing it. It is quite a relief to be free to make a noise in this pleasant open country, after being a long time shut up in musty rooms."

"You are a student, then?"

"Oh, yes. I have been these two years at Heidelberg, and am now going home. I never wished to study—I hate such a dreary life; but my parents gave me the name of a learned man, and thought, dear good creatures, that I must perforce turn out learned, too. I fear they will be mistaken."

"And what is your name, my merry young sir?" asked Leuthold, who took a vague interest in the frank, pleasant face, as if he had seen it before; and felt reluctant to lose sight of it.

"'Tis one that sounds well — Leuthold Waldhof. But you seem to know it," said the young man, as his companion started from the fallen tree on which they had both been sitting, and looked eagerly in his face.

"Yes, I have heard it before."

"Indeed? Well, worthy sir, I was named after a learned man, whom my father and mother knew when they were young. I have often heard my mother talk about him—how wise he was, and how good too. She made us love the name of Leuthold Auerbach!"

"Is he living now?" asked the old man's tremulous voice.

"Oh, no! surely not. He went away suddenly, a little before my father and mother were married, and they never heard of him more. He had just gained great honours for his learning; so grew tired of his dull native city—at least so my father used to say—and they looked for a long time to hear of his fame in some place or other. At last my mother said he must be dead, or he would not have forgotten them, and I have often seen her weep when she told us of him."

Leuthold drew his cloak over his face, and his thin fingers played convulsively with his stick. Alas, alas! that olden dream clung to him still. He could not look upon the son of Herman and Hilda.

"I am wearying you, good sir, with this long story," said the young student, eyeing him with somewhat of curiosity; "and you seem to have journeyed far to-day. Will you suffer me to bear you company awhile, and when you are rested we can go on together. A young man's arm may help you over this rough road."

As the youth spoke, his mother's soul looked out of the kind brown eyes—his mother's tone breathed in the softened voice; at least so it seemed to Leuthold. He

gazed one moment in his face, and then fell on the neck of Hilda's son.

"Tell me of thy parents—of Leipsic—of my ancient home," cried the old man, almost weeping. "Tell me all, dear boy ; for I am Leuthold Auerbach !"

Ere long the two who had so strangely met were sitting hand-in-hand, like old friends, while the unconscious youth described to Leuthold the home of Herman and Hilda—how they lived surrounded by their children, with every comfort that wealth could bestow, enjoying that household peace and unity which makes home a very paradise of love. The boy spoke of his mother, and the kindling of his eye told how dear Hilda was to her child.

"Is thy mother still as beautiful as she was ?" murmured Leuthold.

"Beautiful !" answered the student, laughing. "Why, none of us ever thought of that : perhaps she might have been so once. My father says little Hilda is very like her, and she is an angel of a child. But our mother is so good, so tender—we love her so much."

"Yes, yes, all love her !" said the other, absently ; his thoughts were wandering to the old nook in the professor's house, and the young maiden who sat there with her calm, sweet face, and her glossy hair.

"Whither art thou travelling, honoured friend ?" asked the young man at last. "See ! we have let the sun set upon our talk—hast thou far to go ?"

"Yes !—no !—I cannot tell," muttered Leuthold.

"I hardly know whither chance may lead me," he added, with a faint smile; "I have long been a wanderer."

"Then thou shalt come home with me to my father's house; it will be so pleasant. How proud I shall feel to have found thee, and brought thee again to Leipsic!"

Leuthold half resisted the affectionate entreaty; even now his spirit shrank from reviving that bitter sorrow of old. But when the earnest boy pictured the welcome that awaited them, and especially how happy his mother would be, the old man yielded, and they journeyed on together.

They parted for the night—the elder Leuthold and his young namesake—more like father and son than like those who a few hours before had met as strangers. But in the still hours, when youth slumbers in happy dreams and age alone is wakeful, all the past came as vividly as yesterday to Leuthold's mind. It came, yet brought no pain. He was as one who re-treads at eventide scenes through which he has passed at morning. Now the dusky twilight is over all, veiling alike the rich valley and the gloomy rocks; he knows they were there once, but he sees them no longer, or only dim and indistinct. The whole landscape of life, with its sunshine and storm, its joy and pain, seems all peaceful now.

Leuthold thought, with a heart that throbbed no longer, of his early love. He pictured her as he would soon see her, in her calm happiness, a mother and wife; and he rejoiced that her gentle nature—which gave affectionate tears to the imagined memory of the dead—

had never been pained by the knowledge of the hopeless sorrow of the living. His love for her had been unstained by one selfish feeling, and the balm of sanctified affection lay upon his heart, giving it peace at last.

As he mused his eye fell upon a letter which he had carried for some days in his bosom: it, too, brought blessed thoughts of trials passed, and duties fulfilled.

"My best friend, my dear master!" wrote George Surlan, "rejoice with me, for my Lucia is won! How happy we are in our dear home at Ulm—she loving me with all wife-like love, none the less precious because it required long and patient wooing, and was the growth of years. If thou couldst but see us now—see Lucia, the dreamy fantastic girl, transformed into the sedatest young matron in Ulm—save that at times she leaves her busy household cares, to laugh with her foolish husband, who has not grown wise yet, and has even stolen away some of her own wisdom to make her like himself. Yet she thinks him the greatest man that ever lived, always excepting thee, dear master. Thou knowest how Laurentius has lately passed away: Geinsfleicht broke the old man's heart. John and Peter are rich men now; but I do not envy them, I have my Lucia and my noble Art. If thou comest to Ulm, thou shalt see our cathedral rich in the work of my hands. Lucia says there could be no such wood-carvings anywhere; perhaps it is because she sees her own sweet face, and her husband's too, among the carved ornaments. What vanity in the little lady!—Dear master,

forgive the foolishness of a happy heart that will bless thee while it beats."

Leuthold read for the twentieth time those joyful outpourings of content, and then laid down and slept as peacefully as a child.

Reader, thou hast not been deluded by the creation of fancy. If thou goest to Ulm, thou wilt see there, in the cathedral, wood-carvings so exquisite that thou wilt marvel that nought but the artist's name, "George Surlan," has descended to posterity. But among the saints, sybils, and philosophers, which he has carved, are two heads, life-like and yet most beautiful, which tradition will tell thee are portraits of the artist and his wife. Lament not thou if the lapse of time has swept away all other memorials. These two silent images speak of youth and beauty—of divine Art and holy domestic Love, mingled in sweet union. Surely, though fame has remembered them not, happiest of the happy were George Surlan and his Lucia.

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## CONCLUSION.

"Thou shalt lower to his level day by day,  
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise with clay."—  
TENNYSON.

"Whether that lady's gentle mind  
No longer with the form combined  
I dare not guess! \* \* \*

For love, and beauty, and delight,  
There is no death nor change. Their might  
Exceeds our organs, which endure  
No light, being themselves obscure."—SHELLEY.

AFTER some days' journey Leuthold and young Waldhof arrived within sight of Leipsic. The boy gave full vent to the exuberance of his joy until they drew near, and then the faintest possible shadow fell upon his mirth. We all feel this, more or less, in coming home—a sense as if we hardly dare to be so happy. Young Leuthold did not marvel that his companion was graver than ordinary, and a native delicacy of feeling contributed to silence his tongue. Slowly and wearily the feet of the old man trod the road down which he had fled like the wind on that early morning, impelled by the agony of despairing love. The strength of youth was no more; but with it, too, had passed away youth's keen sense of sorrow. Leuthold would not now have recalled a single day of that olden time.

They stood before the garden where the last sound of Hilda's voice had rung upon his ear. It was all



changed; the thick, shadowing trees were cut down—the green alleys which Hilda had loved so much,—and on the smooth lawn a troop of children were playing. The change smote upon Leuthold's heart: he would not have found a single tree altered in the dear old garden.

"That was my grandfather's house," said the young student. "Doubtless you find it changed. After his death my father cut down the elms, and then sold it."

"And thy mother—what said she?"

"Oh, she was quite satisfied that it was right, the trees made the house so gloomy with their thick branches. I believe she was glad of the change."

Hilda glad to see her ancient home despoiled—to see her lost father's dwelling in the hands of strangers! It was a trifling thing, but Leuthold was pained. For years, in his dreams, every turn in the long shady walks, every bush and tree, had been visited by him in memory—now even they were no more.

As they passed down the narrow street, Leuthold glanced up at the window of his own small room: the sanctuary of his spirit in those olden times. A long, gaudy flag flaunted out of the lattice; they were celebrating a great victory, and the town of Leipzig was bedizened like a conqueror's bride. Leuthold turned away, and looked up no more until he found himself at the abode of Herman.

"Father, father!" cried the joyful tones of the younger Waldhof, as they heard a loud and somewhat coarse voice above the yelping of innumerable

hounds at the entrance of the domain, and saw a tall, heavily-made man lounging among various retainers.

"What! is't thou, my boy?" said the large man, laying his two hands on the youth's shoulders. "Glad to see thee again! How much learning hast brought from Heidelberg? As many ounces as thou hast grown inches? Thou wilt be a wise fellow, Leuthold! Ha! ha! ha!" And a laugh loud and long spoke the father's delight.

No way disconcerted, the student echoed his hoarse merriment in the silvery tones of youth, and then said, proud of his mysterious secret,—

"Guess, father, whom I have found and brought to see you."

Herr Waldhof glanced carelessly at the stranger. "Some master of thine, I suppose. He is very welcome. Give me thy hand, old man; we'll use thee well."

But Leuthold held the broad, brown hand in his, and said,—

"Hast thou forgotten me, Herman?"

There was no mistaking the low, sweet voice, which alone remained unchanged. Herman almost buried the slight frame of his old friend in his giant embrace, and shouted and laughed alternately, with joy at the recognition. Then he held Leuthold out at arm's length, and scanned him closely.

"Why, thou art grown an old man already! Never mind, we all change. How hast thou lived, and

where? But thou must come and see **Madame Waldhof.**"

"**Madame Waldhof!**" How strange it sounded. Yet Leuthold was glad that the dear name of **Hilda** was not uttered.

Herman and Leuthold passed through the long avenue together. Different as they had been in youth, the contrast was more striking than ever in age. Herman's full, broad face, spoke of the redundancy of animal life. There was little intelligence in the large eyes, and the handsome features had grown almost coarse. Leuthold, with his attenuated frame, his thin and sharpened face, was now more beautiful to look upon than Herman. The two men were types of the sensual and the spiritual; one sinking the noblest form to its own meanness, the other exalting the least beautiful exterior to the nobility of the essence within.

As they reached the door, Leuthold drew back. "Wilt thou not first tell thy wife I am here? She may be startled—pained, at this sudden meeting with her dead father's friend."

Herr Waldhof laughed aloud. "Oh, thou needst not fear; Hilda is not very much given to sentiment. She grieves little over the old times now, I suspect. Come along."

In the old hall—it was the same in which we first beheld the two friends—sat a matron in the midst of a troop of noisy children and serving-maids. She was rosy and contented-looking: not a wrinkle marked the comely brow; and the brown eyes seemed ever smiling.

The round cheek and portly figure had long lost all the proportions of girlhood; and something unmistakeable about the matron's air and tone, told of a greater change than these—a change in mind and soul. As Leuthold kissed the hand of Madame Waldhof, he no longer thought of the Hilda of his boyhood.

She let fall a few tears as she spoke of her father, and then the wife of Herman recovered her usual calm demeanour. She called her children, who, after much resistance, came to kiss Leuthold's hand one by one. One,—a sweet, modest-eyed, little maiden, whom her mother called Hilda,—came and stood by Leuthold's knee. It seemed as if the spirit of the first Hilda were revived in her; as the old man met her open gaze, and laid his hand on her soft braided hair, the child wondered that he repeated her name so often in such a low, dreamy tone, and that as he kissed her, a tear, not her own, was left upon her cheek. It had fallen to the memory of what was now nothingness—the Hilda who once had been.

“You will annoy Leuthold with all these young folk,” said Herman to his wife. “Mothers are so vain of their children! Come, old friend, and I will show you all the changes I have made in the house.”

“You have let this hall remain, I see,” said Leuthold, in a low tone, as they went out. “Do you remember that night, Herman?”

“The night I dreamed such a wild dream? It was some of thy strange fancies which got into my brain, Leuthold; but I have forgotten all such things now.

Let us go and see the horses. I hunt almost as much as ever, though I am not so young as I was the day I quarrelled with Von P——. Ha! ha! Dost remember it, Leuthold? To think how foolish I made myself for the sake of that old dame yonder! Yet Hilda has been a good wife to me; and we live very comfortably."

"I am glad," Leuthold answered, absently; and Herman continued—

"Those old times were pleasant, after all, and we often laugh over them. I sometimes thought, after you went so suddenly, that you really fancied Hilda. But if you did, I suppose you have long got over it—these love notions are foolish things. We are all wiser, and we need not quarrel about her now—Ha! ha!"

And Waldhof's laugh made needless the answer which, for his life, Leuthold could not have uttered. All that day he followed his friend mechanically, sat at the board, listened to the husband and wife as they discussed the daily household events, and chronicled the words and deeds of their children. Once only the conversation turned on things in which Leuthold could take an interest. He asked after the treasures of the professor's library.

"Oh, they have passed into different hands," said Madame Waldhof. "I was told that no one cares for manuscripts now, since printing has become known."

"For my part I care little for books or manuscripts either. One lives very comfortably without being learned. I have not caught Madame Waldhof reading

this long time; and I think of her just as highly. I imagine she, too, is quite as contented with me as if I were the cleverest man living."

Hilda looked up in her husband's face with a beaming smile, and laid her hand in his. That look brought back her girlish days—it showed that one feeling remained the same—woman's love!

At last, when Herr Waldhof had fallen asleep, and his wife sat spinning beside him in perfect silence, lest his slumbers should be broken, Leuthold crept away to his own chamber. There, in the stillness of meditation, his whole life rose up before him with its array of shadows. They glided past him, fast changing like forms in a dream. He alone remained the same. To the time of gray hairs Leuthold had carried the one true feeling of life—love. It was a reality; all the rest were but fleeting shadows. He rejoiced that it had been so; that his love had been made immortal in memory; that, embalmed by suffering, the one ideal had remained secure through the changes of life. In this love he rested; still worshipping, not the real Hilda, the wife of Herman, but the Hilda of his dreams—the pure image of womanhood. He loved—not her, but love itself.

Again in his solitude his guardian angel stood beside Leuthold. It showed him the difference between the life of the body and the life of the soul; it painted the man-animal at his feasts, at his pleasures, wasting his existence in petty joys; how, when the mask of youth falls off, he sinks down, down, by lower degrees, until,

in the aged driveller, no sign remains of the casket that contained a divine soul.

“Wouldst thou have exchanged thy life, with all its loneliness—all its cares—for such an one as this?” murmured the inner voice. “Hast thou not been rich?—in the wealth of thy soul. Hast thou not been happy?—in scattering blessings on others, far and wide. Hast thou not been loved? for all holy spirits look down with immortal tenderness on the man who walks the earth in purity, in meekness, and in charity. Thou hast done thy work, O faithful one! Lay thy burden down, and enter into thy rest.”

And on Leuthold’s ear fell another low tone—solemn and sweet—which he knew well.

“Come,” it breathed, “son of my love, I wait for thee! Come home! The shadows are passing away: the immortal day is dawning. Thou hast lived, thou hast suffered, thou hast conquered. Now rejoice!”

As the old man listened, a heavenly smile brightened his face, for he knew that the time of his departure was at hand. He looked out into the night, and the angels of the stars breathed their influence down upon him. Every ray, as it fell, brought with it a divine message, penetrating to his inmost soul. Joyfully, rapturously that weary soul answered the summons, and spread its wings to the land of immortality.

## THE SCULPTOR OF BRUGES.

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ABOUT the middle of the sixteenth century, there was not an artist in the Netherlands whose fame had spread wider than that of Messer Andrea, the sculptor of Bruges. His father had come from Italy, and settled in Flanders, where he lived and struggled, an ardent and enthusiastic man, whose genius cast just sufficient light to show him his own defects. This love of the beautiful was the sole inheritance he left his son. But Andrea's northern birth and education had, to a certain degree, qualified his Italian descent, so that to his father's impulsive nature he added a steady perseverance, without which all the genius in the world is but as a meteor of a moment.

The branch of design that Andrea followed was wood-carving, in which, by his wonderful skill, he surpassed all his contemporaries. In our day, it is impossible, from the few relics that remain, to know the perfection to which our ancestors of the middle ages carried this art; which attained even to the dignity of sculpture, when Gothic saints and Madonnas looked down from their niches in cathedrals: though the



names of the unknown artists who carved these lovely heads and graceful draperies were forgotten, even before the frail material in which they worked had lost its first freshness.

The sculptor of Bruges was one of these now-forgotten artists ; and yet an artist he was, in the highest sense of the word. He lived and moved among beautiful forms ; they influenced his character and refined his mind, yet did not make him unfit for association with the world. Riches and honour came with his fame, until he stood high in the regard of his fellow-citizens ; and the son of the poor Italian student was at last deemed worthy to wed one who had long been the object of an almost hopeless love, a daughter of one of the highest families in Bruges. This union could not but be a happy one ; and Andrea and his wife slowly advanced towards middle age, feeling that their present bliss had not belied the promise of their youth. Still, there were a few bitter drops in their cup : the husband and wife saw several of their children drop off one by one, until all that remained were two boys and a daughter—the lovely little Gertrude, who was her father's darling. Nevertheless, these three were sufficient to make the sculptor's home cheerful, and the lost brothers and sisters were hardly missed.

At the time when our story begins, Andrea had finished his latest work ;—a group of angels, carved in wood, to adorn the church of Bruges. The burghers crowded to gaze upon and admire the work of their fellow citizen, of whom they were so justly proud.

It was indeed a fine specimen of the ancient Gothic carving, such as one meets with sometimes even now in old churches, where the hand of innovation has not reached. Three angels formed the group, one kneeling with up-raised eyes and folded hands, while the other's extended arms were lifted upwards in rapturous adoration; and the third, looking down on the worshippers below, pointed towards heaven. It won universal praise. The artist stood apart, in pleasure not unmingled with honest pride, when many a hand shook his own in friendly congratulation, and many an eye, made humbler by rank and distance, looked at him admiringly.

In all the pleased assembly there was but one dissentient voice, and that was from a brother artist and rival of Andrea. Melchior Kunst was one of those dark and unquiet spirits who seem to cast a shadow wherever they go. He was a man of great talent, yet no one loved him. They could hardly tell why—yet so it was. Even now, all instinctively made way for him, and Melchior strode on until he stood opposite the group. He folded his arms, and looked at it fixedly from under his dark brows. Then he addressed the artist, who stood at a little distance.

"Doubtless you think this very fine, Messer Andrea?"

"It is not what *I* think of it, but the judgment which the world puts on my work, that is of consequence," answered Andrea calmly.

"The composition is well imitated, certainly."

"Imitated? it is my own."

"Indeed!" said Melchior, with a quiet sneer sitting on his lips—the handsomest feature of his very handsome face. "Indeed! And so you never go into another's studio, and copy figures, attitude, and design, as you have here copied from me?"

"It is not true," said Andrea, with difficulty restraining his passion.

"I tell you it is," cried his opponent. "Look, gentlemen! brother artists, look! this group is mine—my own design; and here I execute my will upon what is my own!" He drew a hatchet from under his cloak, and before the wonder-stricken spectators could interfere, he severed one of the upraised hands of the nearest figure.

Andrea was stung to the quick by this mutilation of his work; all his Italian blood was roused within him: he rushed upon Kunst with the fury of a tiger at bay. Those around interfered, but it was needless; for Andrea's well-constituted mind had already got the better of his momentary rage, and he stood, pale, but self-possessed, gazing alternately at his adversary and at his own despoiled work.

"Melchior Kunst," said he at last, "you think you have done me a great injury; and so you have, but not an irreparable one. I will not revenge myself now, but you will be repaid some time."

A loud laugh from Kunst made the sculptor once more clench his hands, while the bright red mounted to his brow; but he said no more, and after Melchior's

departure he too left the hall with some friends, who were stricken dumb by this untoward quarrel.

It was late in the evening when Andrea returned towards his own home. He walked slowly along by the side of the dark and gloomy canal, which the setting light of the young moon only made more solemn and fearful. Thick ivy-hung walls, even in the daytime, cast a heavy shadow on the water; and now it looked like some dark abyss, which no man could fathom. Here and there some pale solitary ray of moonlight pierced through the branches of the acacias that overhung the opposite side, seeming like a bright arrow flashing through the darkness.

Andrea's heart was very heavy. His triumph had ended in pain: disappointment not only at the injury done to his work, but at the unjust accusation of Melchior Kunst. Andrea knew how ready are the suspicions of the world when once aroused; and he fancied that already cold and doubtful eyes examined his group with less favour than heretofore. And besides, the sudden ebullition of anger to which he had been goaded left an exhaustion, both bodily and mental; as is usually the case with men of Andrea's gentle and not easily-roused temperament.

The sculptor walked on quickly amidst the gathering darkness, for the moon had now set. He fancied now and then that he heard stealthy footsteps at a distance behind him; and perhaps this made him unconsciously urge his pace. Andrea was no coward, but it was a lonely place by the water-side, and he was un-

armed. Still, as the footsteps approached no nearer, he reproached himself for yielding to the delusion of an imagination heated by the events of the day. All at once he heard distinctly a plunge in the water of some heavy body. His first idea was, that some unfortunate had thus ended his life and his miseries; but the sound was so distant, that he was uncertain. He retraced his steps; but there was nothing to justify his previous thought. The canal flowed on, silent and dark as before: not a struggle, not a groan, not a cry rose up from its gloomy depths. It could have been only a heavy stone, which had fallen from the old dilapidated wall into the waters beneath. Andrea felt sure of this, and went on his way until he reached his home—a home where, since he left, danger and anxiety had entered.

Three days after this, two armed officers of justice made their appearance in the dwelling of the sculptor of Bruges. They came to take prisoner the master of the house, accused of the crime of murder! From the day of the contest in the hall, Melchior Kunst had never been seen, until that morning, when his lifeless body had floated up from the bed of the canal into the very market-place. Then one of the horror-stricken bystanders remembered that on the same night of their quarrel Messer Andrea had been seen to pass by the way that led along the canal, and that not long after Melchior Kunst also followed. Another man, who lived near, had heard a plunge in the water, but thought it was only his own dog, who often at night

swam across the canal. A third also had met Messer Andrea beside the canal, but had seen no other person. This was sufficient evidence to convict the unfortunate artist.

The officers found their prisoner alone. He was sitting with his head buried in his hands, and hardly moved at their entrance. One of them laid his hand on the sculptor's shoulder, and claimed him as a prisoner.

Andrea looked up with a face so listless, so vacant, so deadly pale, that the officer started, and unconsciously let go his hold.

"A prisoner!" said Andrea, without making an effort to move. "What have I done? Who accuses me?"

The officer was a man of kindly nature, who had known Messer Andrea in former times. He gently and respectfully explained his errand; but had to repeat it several times before Andrea comprehended them. It seemed that some heavy cloud darkened his faculties. At last he understood the whole.

"So they accuse me of being a murderer—an assassin?" said he, rising, while a shiver ran through his frame. Then, addressing the first officer, "You were a good man once—follow me!" The other hesitated. "You need not fear," continued Andrea; "I am unarmed—I have no thought of escaping from justice."

The man followed his prisoner until they came to a darkened room: it was the chamber of death. On the bed lay the pale and shrouded form of a woman. Very beautiful she must have been, and her beauty had

scarcely passed its maturity. No long illness had taken away the roundness of health from her face, so that even in death she looked lovely as a marble statue. The long, dark lashes rested on her cheek, and a few locks of jet black hair, escaping from the fillet that bound her head, gave a life-like air to her repose. By her side lay an infant—a flower of an hour—whose little soul had come into it at sunrise, and departed at sunset. They were the wife and child of Andrea.

The sculptor pointed to the dead. “Look there,” he said, “and say if I am likely to have revenged any trifling insult—if I am likely to have been a murderer!” His voice grew hoarse; he stretched his arms towards the body of his wife, and then fell to the earth in strong convulsions.

During nearly the whole time that elapsed between his apprehension and trial, Andrea was dead to the consciousness of his misery. A low fever enfeebled all his senses, and reduced his outward form to the appearance of an old man. His friends—for he had still many—took both his sons to their charge. It was well that they did, for the father seemed to have lost all remembrance even of their existence. When they visited him, he took not the least notice of them; so the children were at last wisely sent far away from the scene of disgrace and suffering. But with Gertrude the father would not part. She was a fair little creature, the image of her mother in feature and expression, but her complexion resembled her father. Her eyes were of that deep brown-gray which is seldom

seen beyond childhood—so dark, that a careless observer would call them black. Gertrude's hair was of that colour which the old masters often gave to heads of Christ and of the Virgin—which the uninitiated might call red, but which painters know to be the most beautiful of all tints. It gave to sweet Gertrude the appearance of an angel.

The first evidence that Andrea showed of returning consciousness, was in recognising his little daughter, and calling her by her name. It was her mother's also ; and perhaps that, aided by the strong resemblance, was a comfort to the widowed father. He began to talk coherently, first with Gertrude and then with others who came to see him ; and by degrees his mind and body gathered strength, so that he was able to think of his defence against the terrible crime laid to his charge. This was a momentous thing, for the proofs were all against him, and Andrea could bring no evidence in his own favour, save his own explanation of what had happened on his way homewards on that fatal day, and the irreproachable character he had borne all his life.

At last the sculptor of Bruges was brought from prison to the judgment-hall. He seemed to himself like one risen from the grave, and so he likewise appeared to those about him. Andrea had been a strong, powerful, noble-looking man, but now all his flesh had shrunk away, and his height only made him appear more shadowy. Dark circles were round his eyes, and his face bore an unvaried sallow hue.



Nevertheless, his mien was firm and composed ; no one could look at him, and for a moment doubt his innocence. Andrea's little daughter stood by his side ; one might have likened her to a flower growing close beside a tomb. Gertrude had become accustomed to the change in her father's looks, and the shocked and anxious gaze of all around struck her with alarm. She crept closer to him, never taking her eyes from his face.

The trial proceeded. All was against Andrea : even the words he had uttered before Melchior left the hall, were brought in judgment against him : they had sounded like a threat. None who had known Andrea doubted in their own hearts that he was a guiltless man, but the circumstantial evidence was too strong to be legally contradicted. The accused was found guilty ; and Andrea—the gentle, upright man, who had never lifted a hand against a fellow-creature, save in that one evil hour when he was driven to passion by Melchior Kunst—was removed from the hall of justice with the stain of murder on his name.

The execution of the sentence was deferred for a short space, for the sake of the hitherto unsullied character of the criminal. In those days the hand of law was often tampered with, and never was it with greater show of justice than in this instance. Andrea's many friends interposed on his behalf. They succeeded in obtaining only a suspension of the sentence for a few months, that some chance might elicit the truth which so many doubted. But in the interim the sculptor

was ordered to execute some work of art to adorn the Palais de Justice at Bruges, where he had been tried. For this purpose he was brought from his cell, and confined in the hall which had witnessed his trial.

It was a large, gloomy-looking chamber, so dimly lighted from without, that even at mid-day the dark shadows in the corners of the room looked like night. An immense hearth, on which lay a few faggots, was the only cheerful object, but even that light and warmth did not reach beyond the immediate vicinity of the fire. There was no furniture in the room, save one small table in the centre, a bench, and a straw couch in the gloomiest corner. It was a place in which one would instinctively shrink from looking behind, and where one's own footsteps would sound hollow and full of dread, as if something fearful were following after. Andrea and his daughter heard the heavy door close, and they were alone in the hall. The little girl led her father to the bench beside the hearth, and then sat down at his feet, holding his hands fast in hers. She dared not look anywhere but at the bright fire and at her father's face; even the shadows that the flames cast on the ceiling made her start sometimes. Gertrude had been accustomed to a prison, for she had never left her father, except when taken home at night, to return next morning—but this place seemed gloomier still than the dungeon.

Andrea had no hope. His life had been free from any very heavy sorrows, and the first that came, so fearful as they were, quite overwhelmed him. His sole desire

now was to employ the short remnant of his life in executing some memorial of his talents to leave behind him, that when time had removed the shadow from his fame, his children might have no reason to blush for their father. He returned again to his long-cherished occupation. For a while this gave him sensations almost amounting to pleasure. His step became lighter, and his countenance lost somewhat of its settled melancholy. He almost forgot his sorrows, his blighted name, his impending doom, in the exercise of his beloved art. He would cease from his work, look at the beautiful figure which had risen to life under his hand, and murmur to himself, "What man will say that the hand of an assassin has done this?—that the brain which conceived this dream of beauty could plan a murder?"

And by degrees the influence of his art in some measure soothed the mind of the sorrow-stricken man. His desolate prison became cheerful with the graceful forms which it contained, and Gertrude moved among the whole like a beautiful spirit. If ever the sculptor clung to hope and life, it was when he looked at his darling child, and at the more imperishable offspring of his genius.

At last Andrea's work drew nigh to a close: the wood-sculpture was finished. Then it was that the enthusiasm which had sustained him faded away, and the artist's soul sank within him. He gave the last touches to his beautiful work—he knew he could do no more—and then went and sat down in a stupor of grief

and despair. Gertrude clung round him, but he did not speak to her or embrace her.

"Father, dear father, are you weary? You are not angry with your little girl?" and the child stood on tiptoe, trying to remove the hands which covered his face.

Andrea seemed hardly conscious of her presence. He did not move, but kept repeating every now and then in a low tone, "I have done my work—I have no hope—now let me die."

The terrified child, who had all along been kept in ignorance of her father's doom, began to weep, but her tears were unregarded. An hour after the magistrates of Bruges entered. They came to view the finished work of the artist. High as Andrea's reputation had been, they did not expect so beautiful a group as that which now met their eyes. Its subject was "eternal justice"—not the woman with bound eyes and balanced scales—but an open-eyed angel, all-beholding, and equally requiting all. They looked upon it in silence, and then turned to the artist, who, wan and haggard, stood behind his judges. One of them, an old man, was melted even to tears. Forgetting the dignity of office, the magistrate took hold of the criminal's hand and led him to a seat.

"You must not stand, Messer Andrea; you are not yet strong," said he compassionately. "Sit and rest, while we examine your beautiful work."

The sculptor obeyed without a word: he was passive as a child. Little Gertrude, who had shrunk away at

the sight of strangers, came and stood silently behind her father, taking fast hold of his garments. The two magistrates inspected the sculpture, and could not restrain their admiration. The eye of the unfortunate artist brightened for a moment at their warm praise, but immediately his face returned to its accustomed melancholy.

"It is all in vain," he answered; "you cannot make men forget the past—you cannot remove the blot from the name of my children—you cannot give to their father his forfeit life."

The magistrates looked at one another, and the elder one spoke.

"There is hope still, Messer Andrea; have you courage to hear it?"

The artist started up. "Tell me only that I am proved innocent, and I will thank God and die."

"We do not promise quite so much," said one of the judges, wishing to temper Andrea's violent excitement.

"Yet take heart! Many strange things have been discovered to-day," continued the aged man whose kindness had first moved Andrea. "Be calm now; ere long we may send you good news: nay," and the good man could no longer hide his hopeful tidings, "it is not impossible that you may be free to-morrow."

The magistrates departed, leaving the poor prisoner with a wildly-throbbing heart, which he vainly endeavoured to still. All that day he sat with Gertrude in his arms, kissing her, fondling her, at times almost weeping over her. To all the questions of the wonder-

ing child he only answered, "To-morrow, love ; we may be free to-morrow."

And when the attendants came to remove Gertrude for the night, he unclasped her arms from round his neck, with the promise that he too would go away with her to-morrow.

"Go away to-morrow?" cried the happy child. "Will you, too, leave this gloomy place to-morrow, and return no more?"

"God forbid I should return! No, my child, never more," answered the father, with a shudder.

"And shall we go out together—shall we go to our own home?" pursued Gertrude.

"Yes, dear child," said Andrea, as he kissed her once more, and set her on the ground from his arms, that were too weak for even so light a burden. "Yes, my Gertrude, I shall indeed go home to-morrow."

He had spoken truth.

Soon after daybreak next morning some officers entered the hall, bearing a release for the prisoner. A stranger—an Italian woman—who had once passed through Bruges, and lately returned thither, deposed to having received a letter from Melchior Kunst, dated on the fatal day, stating his determined intention of self-murder at the time and place where he was discovered to have met his end.

Further than this was never known. Andrea was innocent! His fellow-citizens rejoiced as one man—for Messer Andrea was proved innocent.

They found him in the prison, leaning on the table,

his head resting on his arms, and his upturned face raised towards his beautiful work. But as they drew nearer, they saw that his countenance was meaningless, and that no life shone in his fixed and open eyes. The sculptor of Bruges was dead—his heart had broken with joy.\*

\* The leading incidents of this story are strictly true. The works of Andrea may still be seen in the Palais de Justice at Bruges.

## THE ITALIAN'S DAUGHTER.

### *A True Story of the English Poor.*

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IN one of the midland counties of England there is a district, the name of which we shall not give, but merely allude to its characteristics. It has risen up within the last century, until, from a few clusters of poor cottages, the seat of a manufacture of trifling importance, it has become one of the wealthiest, most populous, and most intelligent communities within the three kingdoms. The five or six small hamlets have grown into towns, whose boundaries meeting, have all merged into one mass of habitations; so that, but for the diversity of name which each portion still preserves, it might be considered as one large city of manufactures, such as Manchester or Birmingham. But like most newly-risen places, this region still presents an anomalous mixture of town and country; for instance, between two colonies where the manufacture is carried on, a few green meadows yet unbuilt upon, will intervene; and the tall chimney of



"the works" sometimes casts its smoke upon a puny corn-field or a blackberry hedge. Alternately the eye views green wooded undulations and hills covered with red brick houses, as if town and country were struggling together for the mastery. But as soon as the habitations are left behind, the ruralities of the place triumph, and the naturally beautiful face of the country is seen in all its luxuriousness.

On a little hill up which the road winds, just without the town, was—perhaps is—a row of cottages inhabited by working people. But with one only have we to do. Its inmates sat or lolled outside the door, enjoying the cool summer evening. They were a mother and some half-dozen children, of all sizes and ages. Mrs. Sutton was a comfortable-looking, middle-aged woman, clad with tolerable neatness. Whether she had ever been pretty, was a matter entirely traditional: probably she had, for the neighbourhood to which she belonged is remarkable for the good looks of its damsels; but the wear and tear of eight-and-thirty years had entirely obliterated Mrs. Sutton's beauty, if she ever had any. She stood tossing her youngest hope, a baby of three months old, and watching the two others playing at marbles. They were sturdy boys, save that their faces had the paleness which was the result of their occupation; a circumstance which never fails to strike a visitant to this region, where the workpeople all acquire the same pallid hue. Yet it is not unhealthy; and it gives the young girls a delicate complexion, which, though fleeting, is still very attrac-

tive while it lasts. Mrs. Sutton's little maidens were an evidence of this fact: two fairer blossoms never grew up in a poor man's home than did the twins, Edna and Keziah.

And here—to account for such extraordinary appellations—we must premise that Scripture names of the most out-of-the-way character are at a premium in the neighbourhood of which we write—the boys being all Enochs, Calebs, or Obadiahs; the girls all Miriams, Jemimas, or Naomis, with a sprinkling of such ultra-romantic cognomens as Thyrza, Zillah, or Rosanna. One cannot but observe how these things mark the character of the early inhabitants of a region which was once the stronghold of Wesley and Whitfield; how, whether or no the descendants of these saintly-named children have kept up their progenitors' Christian zeal, they have certainly kept up their Christian names.

But we are wandering from Mrs. Sutton. She, good soul, was wandering too, at least her eyes were, for she was watching up the hill a couple who seemed both weary and waysore;—a young woman, and a man who might have been any age from twenty to forty, for he had the hard sallow features which never show the progress of time. Still less would years be marked on his low and ungainly figure, which was stunted and slightly deformed—a strong contrast to the tall and upright form of his companion. This ill-matched pair came near Mrs. Sutton's door, and then the man, after whispering to his fellow-traveller, ad-

dressed the good dame in broken English, which she could not understand. She looked inquiringly at the woman.

"My husband"—Mrs. Sutton could not help a slight start, and glance of surprise at the man, as the young creature said this—"my husband means that we are very tired, and would be glad of a lodging for the night, if you can give us one, or direct us elsewhere. We can pay you," she added with a half smile, seeing the doubtful expression of Mrs. Sutton's face. But to do the latter justice, we must say that it was caused as much by her surprise at hearing the young wife speak in the good vernacular tongue, mingled with a natural feminine curiosity to know the reason that any English-woman could marry such a man.

Perhaps this latter quality, added to her good-nature, made her assent to their request.

"You can sit down and rest," she said, "and I'll get you some supper; but I can't promise more till my 'master' comes home"—*master* being the S—shire equivalent for husband; and, alas! sometimes the title is only too true. But in this case it was a mere form of speech, as every one knew that Mrs. Sutton was both master and mistress herself in her own house.

So the two wanderers sat down, and soon the cottage-hearth was blazing with a friendly brightness which is at the will of the poorest labourer in this plentiful land of coal. Oh, there are no such fires out of S—shire! The foreigner bent over his supper in hungry taciturnity, occasionally darting glances from

his large, bright, black eyes, that seemed the more piercing from the bushy eyebrows under which they gleamed, and, in conjunction with the long, matted hair and the yellow skin, made Mrs. Sutton feel rather uncomfortable. She hated foreigners; but her motherly and womanly sympathy was excited by the weary and sickly look of the young wife, who had all an English-woman's claims to compassion; and Mrs. Sutton inly resolved that, whatever her "master" said, these strange wayfarers should remain for a night's shelter under her roof.

They did remain, and before noon on the following day, Pietro Ponti—that was his name, he said—had so ingratiated himself with the children, as to win a few kindly opinions from the mother herself; while his gentle wife was liked so much, that Mrs. Sutton almost felt it a relief when, after paying for their lodging, they requested to occupy it for another day or so.

"She is such a mild, soft-spoken young creature," was Mrs. Sutton's confidential observation to her husband John, after the first day passed with their inmates—"she seems almost a lady. I wonder what on earth could have made her marry that ugly little fellow!"

And probably the good dame's curiosity would have led her on to direct questionings instead of vague wonderment, had she not been withheld by a certain reserve and refinement which marked the young woman's deportment, and caused the mechanic's wife to treat her with unconscious deference. Yet she was not proud,

for she always helped Mrs. Sutton in her domestic duties without any reluctance or awkwardness.

At last Pietro spoke of proceeding onwards; and then the anxious looks of his wife loosened Mrs. Sutton's tongue. She boldly asked whither they intended going.

"I—I hardly know," said the wife timidly. Ponti, in his broken English, explained that he was an Italian, who gained his living by catching bullfinches and larks, and teaching them to sing, in the hope of meeting purchasers.

"A pretty way of making a fortune!" thought Mrs. Sutton; and then she said, "Well, master, if such is your trade, you may as well follow it here as anywhere: you will find plenty of birds in the fields hereabouts; and as your wife seems comfortable, why, suppose you were to stay with us a little longer?"

This proposal caused a consultation between the husband and wife, if a consultation it could be called, where Pietro had all the talk to himself, and his help-mate meekly acquiesced. It ended in an assent to the offer, and the Italian and his wife were fairly established in the Sutton family.

"I am really glad you are not going, Mrs. Ponti," was the hearty exclamation of the kindly hostess to her young friend the first time they happened to be alone. "I wonder your husband could think of dragging you up and down the country."

"He never thought about it, I believe," was the deprecating reply. "But," added the wife, while her

cheek flushed and her head drooped, "I am glad to stay here—for the present. I would not like going among strangers now."

"Ah, no, no, poor girl!" quickly answered Mrs. Sutton: "but have you no mother to be with you?" She repented of her words ere they were well uttered; for the girl burst into a fit of weeping so violent, that all the consolatory endearments that women of all classes instinctively use to one another in time of affliction were employed by Mrs. Sutton in vain. At last the wife of the Italian grew calmer, and said without tears, though in an accent of the deepest sorrow, "I have no relatives, no friends in the wide world, except my husband."

"Poor thing—poor thing! But you know, my dear, a good husband is something, and he seems very fond of you." Mrs. Sutton tried hard to say this, as if she really believed the fact.

"Yes—yes, Pietro is very kind," answered the young woman, faintly smiling. "I thought so, or I would not have married him. Shall I tell you how it was?"

Now this was the climax of all Mrs. Sutton's wishes; but she had self-denial enough to say, "Not if it troubles you, Mrs. Ponti."

"I wish you would call me Anne," said the girl, taking her hand: "you are the first woman who has seemed to love me since my mother died." And here she began to weep afresh, but soon recovered herself so as to tell her story: how that she came from York; that

she was an only child, and fatherless, and had been left utterly friendless and helpless on her mother's death.

"It was during her illness," Anne continued, "that Pietro Ponti, who lived in the same house, showed us much kindness. He was so much older than I, he treated me as a father would a child, and helped me out of all my troubles. When I was quite broken-hearted, I heard that he was going away on his usual rounds, and I went to him to ask his advice as to how I could support myself. My poor mother had been a dressmaker; but I was too young to take her business, for I was only seventeen. I felt that I must starve or beg, for I had no money. Then Pietro talked to me quietly and seriously, and told me that there was but one way in which he could maintain me, and save me from poverty—if I would marry him. He said this doubtingly, almost afraid that I would be angry; but I was not, for I saw tears in his eyes when he spoke of my youth and beauty being thrown away on a poor deformed creature like himself. I knew it was all his kindness; and I told him how grateful I was, and that, if he would let me think of it for a week, I would see if I could not make up my mind to be his wife. Pietro asked me if I had any other lover—any one I preferred to him? But I said no; there was no one who seemed to me so good and kind as he. And so, at the end of the week, I married him; and he has ever been a good husband to me. I fear I hardly love him as he deserves; but indeed I try; and I do obey him in all things."

To this long story Mrs. Sutton had listened without a word. As Anne ended, the good woman pressed her hand, bade "God bless her!" in rather a husky voice, and muttering a hope that she would stay long with them, and be very happy, went about her household business. But all that day Mrs. Sutton's voice—at times raised sharply enough—sounded softer than usual; and when Pietro Ponti came in to supper, the best portion of the meal, and the warmest corner of the fireplace, were kindly, though abruptly, bestowed on the little deformed Italian.

Two or three months passed, and Ponti and his wife became like members of the family. The bird-catcher pursued his trade successfully, being taken to the woodland haunts for miles round by the younger Suttons, with whom he was an especial favourite. They Anglicised his name into Peter, which appellation was soon given him by the whole family. And ten times better than even they liked Peter did they all love the pretty Anne, who seemed so young that she was almost a playmate for the children. But a continual pensiveness darkened her face, though not detracting from its mild beauty. Her husband was always kind, yet still there was a perpetual yearning—a restless void in the girl's heart. How could it be otherwise? She never uttered a word of complaint, or even of sadness; but often, when she sat preparing for the little being that was soon to give her new ties of love, Anne would let the work fall from her hands, while her dark-blue eyes, so dreamy in their depths,



were fixed on vacancy, as if looking wistfully into the dim future. Good, plain Mrs. Sutton, could not understand these fancies, and sometimes wished that Anne would think less and talk more—it would be much better for her.

Birth and death came hand in hand together. The babe lived—the mother died! Kind-hearted Mrs. Sutton closed the eyes of the poor young creature who had so twined round her honest heart. She had tended her with a mother's care until the last; when she saw how peaceful and beautiful the dead face looked, the good woman dried her tears.

“Poor thing!—poor thing! She has nothing to trouble her now! Perhaps it is as well—God knows best!”

And then Mrs. Sutton heard the wail of the little motherless babe, and for a time forgot the dead in her care over the living.

“Charley is six months old now,” she said to her husband. “He is strong and healthy; I shall turn him away, and take this poor little creature, who wants the most.”

So she nursed the babe, and became a mother to it in the stead of her who had now no need of the comfort of a child. Many a time, when the little one grew older, and began to laugh and crow in her arms, Mrs. Sutton would think of its dead mother; how Anne's heart would have leaped to feel the bliss of maternal love—the tiny, twining fingers—the kiss of the little soft lips. But then she would remember that a

child's love is not all-sufficient, and that perhaps it was well for poor Anne that she lived no longer.

Whether the widower grieved much for the loss of his sweet young wife it was impossible to tell. The Italian was always of a reserved disposition; and when the first shock was over, he seemed to return to his old habits much as if nothing had happened. His taciturnity increased; and sometimes, after spending the day out in the fields, he came home, silently took his place in his own warm corner, and uttered not a syllable until it was time to go to rest. He rarely noticed his child, except that when Mrs. Sutton began to talk to him about the name of the babe, hinting that, as a matter of course, the little one should be christened Anne, Pietro shrank from her with an expression of acute pain, and at once said, "No:—that the child should be called Ginevra."

"Jenny what?" cried Mrs. Sutton, aghast at this foreign appellation.

"Ginevra!" said the Italian, lingering on the melodious syllables as if it were a name long unuttered, but most dear, and saying it over and over again, coupled with the tender and musical diminutives of his own language. All this was incomprehensible to the worthy woman, and she tried again to protest against "so unchristian and heathenish a name." But the only answer she gained was the distinct repetition of the name, in a tone so firm that she saw it was useless to dispute the father's will. As a contest of words between herself and the foreigner would have

been highly unprofitable to both, Mrs. Sutton wisely yielded her point, probably for the first time in her life. So the babe was christened Ginevra; but Mrs. Sutton, determined to make the baptismal name void, gave to her nursling the pet diminutive of Jenny; and Jenny she was called evermore by the household.

The child grew up as a younger sister in the family: no one seemed to look upon her in any other light. She learned to call her nurse "mother," and John Sutton "father;" while her own father was "Peter," as he was called by the rest of the children. Nor did the Italian seem to care for the abolition of these parental ties; he treated his own daughter just as he did the little Suttons, with neither more nor less regard than he had ever shown to them. Only he always called her Ginevra; sometimes adding to it sweet diminutives, but these seemed less meant for the child than recollections awakened by the name she bore.

In truth, as the little girl grew older, no one could have guessed her Italian descent. She was in all respects an English child, with her soft blue eyes, and brown hair, like her mother's—her true mother—now so utterly forgotten, that her very existence was unknown to the child whose life had been her death. Once or twice, smitten in conscience, Mrs. Sutton tried to explain the truth to Jenny; but the mystery was too great for the little girl's mind. And besides, Mrs. Sutton loved her nursling so much, it was a pain to remember she was not her own child—so at last she let the matter rest.

Time passed on ; Jenny became of an age to go to school ; and to school she was accordingly sent, with her foster brother Charley—Pietro Ponti never interfering in the matter at all. Indeed, from the child's birth, he had seemed to give her up entirely to the Suttons. She was clothed and fed by the honest labourer with his own children ; and not a murmur did worthy John Sutton, and his equally worthy helpmate, utter with regard to the little one thus quartered on them, and dependent on their bounty. In everything she was to them as their own. Oh, there are noble hearts in the dwellings of the English poor ! and good deeds, of which the greatest philanthropist might be proud, are often concealed under thatched roofs, and highways, and hedges, unknown and unchronicled, except by the All-seeing.

When Jenny was ten years old, her father died. They found him one morning lying dead in his bed, in the little room where he slept, and where he taught his birds ; rising up at daybreak, whistling and talking to them in his own tongue. The little birds were now warbling joyously, carolling in the sunshine over the pillow of the dead man. Poor Pietro ! in life they had been his only companions, and they were the only witnesses of his death. The same kind hands which had laid his wife in her grave now laid her husband beside her ; but there was little mourning for him. He had come a stranger, and remained a stranger to the last. For some time Pietro's trade had not prospered, and he had owed his very subsistence to the charity of

those whose inmate he had been so long. Now, but for John Sutton, the Italian might have found a parish grave.

The only treasures left by Pietro Ponti were his birds, a silver crucifix, and a little Italian story-book, in which was written a name—the name he had given his daughter—Ginevra. It might have been his mother's, a sister's, perhaps some early memory still dearer; for the human heart is the same all over the world. But nothing more was ever known of the father of Ginevra Ponti. After a time, Mrs. Sutton explained to her adopted child as much of her history as she knew herself, and then, clasping Jenny in her arms, told her that she need think of it no more, for that she was henceforth her own daughter.

Two years or more passed away; the sons and daughters of Mrs. Sutton grew up: one girl married; two boys went away—another turned out ill, and gave many a gnawing care to his parents. It was a hard time for trade, and anxieties came heavily upon John Sutton, yet he never complained of the additional burden which he had in his adopted child: the idea never crossed his mind, nor his wife's either. They seemed to think that Jenny was always to live with them; to send her away would be like parting with their own. That any one should claim her was equally improbable; but strange things happen sometimes.

One day a visitor, who appeared not exactly a lady, though she was very well dressed, came to inquire for Mrs. Sutton.

"I wanted to speak to you," she said abruptly. "My name is Dalton.—Miss Dalton." Mrs. Sutton started. "You seem to know the name!"

"I have heard it before," answered Mrs. Sutton, briefly and rather grimly, being struck with a presentiment, which was either pleasure or dread—she knew not which.

"I don't belong to these parts," continued Miss Dalton, in a tone that, if not exactly refined, sounded honest and straightforward; "but in crossing that churchyard, I saw a stone with the name of Anne Meredith Ponti. Now, I have been long looking for my brother's child, of whom I only know that her name was Anne Meredith Dalton, and that she married a wandering Italian called Ponti. The sexton sent me to you for information."

Though incensed at the imperative tone of her visitor, Mrs. Sutton honestly related all she knew.

"It must have been my niece," said Mrs. Dalton, musingly. Mrs. Sutton began to speak of poor Anne—what she was like in person; but the latter stopped her quickly—"You need not describe her, as I never saw her; but let me look at the child."

Jenny came, was much admired, and at last acknowledged in favour of her mouth and chin, which were, the lady avouched, exactly those of a Dalton. She at once declared her intention of taking away her niece, to educate and adopt.

Mrs. Sutton was perfectly overwhelmed! To part with Jenny, her darling Jenny, was a thing dreadful

even to imagine. She burst into tears, snatched the child to her bosom, and ran away with her out of the house.

But with calm reflection came a dread of the injury she might be doing to Jenny's interests in thus keeping her to share the poverty which was coming darkly on, when she might be made a lady of by one to whom she was bound by ties of kindred. The simple-hearted but upright woman thought of all this, until she was well-nigh bewildered; and then she had to convince her husband, too. But Mary Sutton was a woman who, through prejudice and ignorance, possessed that rare faculty of seeing *the right*, and of acting up to what she saw. The end was, that within a week the adopted parents of the little Jenny consented to Miss Dalton's proposition.

"If she should come to any harm," cried the poor woman, folding her darling to her heart in the agony of a parting which Jenny could hardly comprehend—"if you do not teach her what is right, and be kind to her, I shall never forgive myself."

Miss Dalton promised, with an earnestness and sincerity which was proved by her moistened eyes and softened voice, that she would try to be as good a mother to the orphan as the excellent woman who had nurtured Jenny for so many years. Then she took the child away; and Jenny's sweet face was seen no more among those of her adopted brothers and sisters. From the far distant home to which she was taken came her childish letters, every line of which was wept

over, though with some self-reproach, since Jenny said she was "so happy!" But year by year they grew less frequent; and at last altogether ceased. A neighbour once passing through the town, tried to get a sight of her, but failed: and though the circumstance brought a few tears to Mrs. Sutton's eyes, and a pain to her heart, at the thought of her darling having forgotten her, still the regret soon passed away. The poor have no time for much sentiment, and Mrs. Sutton was engrossed by her own thickly-gathering cares.

It is all very well for political economists and theoretical philanthropists to talk about the wisdom of laying up for old age, and providing against the evil day; but for a labouring man, whose weekly earnings only suffice to provide weekly food for the many little mouths that must be filled, the matter is extremely difficult. Many and many an honest man, who has brought up a large family, which has not requited his care, is thrown upon parish charity in his old age. It was not quite so bad as this with John Sutton; but still, when all their young nestlings were fledged, and had gone out into the wide world—some for good, and some for evil—the parents were left, aged, solitary, and poor.

"Ah, if Keziah had but stayed!" lamented the poor old mother, when the prettiest of the twins stole away one fine morning, and secretly married a worthless young man, leaving her parents deprived of the few comforts which her earnings, as the last of the flock, had brought them.

"Children always turn out so," angrily said John



Sutton. "And we that were fools enough to bring up another body's child, too: much good *she* has been, either."

"Don't say that, John," answered Mrs. Sutton, and her voice was gentler than it had once been: trouble is a great softener sometimes. "I will never believe it was poor Jenny's fault; and anyhow, we did what was right, and that ought to be a comfort to us."

It was years since the name of the Italian's daughter had been mentioned by the Suttons. The wounded feelings of the old man had brought up the subject now, and his wife could not drive it from her mind. Her own daughter's unkindness made her think of the little gentle creature whom she had loved so much, and who had ever been willing and dutiful, far more so than her own wild troop of children. As the old woman knelt before her hearth, kneading the dough for the one loaf which was sufficient now for their weekly need, her thoughts went back twenty years, wandering, by a natural train of ideas, to the pile of bread she had used to bake when the cottage was filled with merry children, now scattered far and wide. In fancy, she saw little Jenny standing by her side, burying her round, rosy arms in the dough, as she was so fond of doing—and the good woman stopped to wipe her eyes, which these old memories made dim.

"Poor Jenny, if she could but come back, and be as she used to be. But that's quite impossible," thought Mrs. Sutton with a heavy sigh.

Life is more full of strange coincidences than we are

aware. How often, on meeting unexpectedly some dear, long-lost friend, do we remember that our thoughts had, only the day before, with a curious wilfulness, persisted in bringing up the very face we were so soon to see, and we laugh, and say, "What an odd chance it was!" As if there were such a thing as chance in this world!

Little did Mrs. Sutton think, as she got the tea ready, that when she and her good man went to rest that night it would be with the happy knowledge that the dear lost Jenny was once more sleeping under their roof. But so it was.

While they sat at their homely meal the latch was lifted, a young girl's face appeared, and a sweet voice said, "May I come in, *mother*?"

"*Mother!*"—Who could it be? Alas, not the erring Keziah; nor yet the other twin, Edna—her home was beyond the Atlantic. It was the child of their adoption, the long lost Jenny.

What a tea-drinking that was! The old couple forgot all their cares in the delight of welcoming her. They were never weary of looking at and admiring Jenny, now grown a tall and graceful woman, like what her mother had been. But the sadness that had darkened the face of poor Anne was not found in her daughter's.

After the first delight was passed, Mrs. Sutton said mournfully, "But we shall not have you long, Jenny: you are a rich lady now, I suppose?"

Jenny put her arm round the neck of her old nurse,

and whispered, merrily, "Dear mother, I am not a lady; and I am as poor as Job: and I will never go away from you again, if you will let me stay."

And then she told at length, what we must relate in a few words, how her aunt, who was a prosperous dress-maker in a large city, as Jenny grew a woman, had made her cease all communication with the Suttons. They were "not respectable enough." It was only the accident of the neighbour's inquiring for her that brought to Jenny any news of them or their troubles.

"Then," said the young girl, deeply blushing, "I thought how wicked and ungrateful I must seem to you; and I asked my aunt to let me come and see you, but she refused. I could not rest; I was very miserable. But she fell ill, and I thought it would be wrong to leave her—so I tended her six months, until she died."

"And what became of the business?" asked Mrs. Sutton, who had not lost her prudence, especially for those she loved. "She promised me to provide for you, Jenny. How comes it you're 'as poor as Job?'"

Jenny hung her head. "She told me I should have all she had—if—if I would never come near you again. So"—added the girl simply, clinging fondly to her adopted parents—"she left her money and the business to some one else, and I have got to earn my living. Never mind—I am a capital dress-maker. I'll make a fortune, now I am come back to you."

"And how did you come—all alone, poor child?"

"I walked almost all the way, for I had hardly any money. Oh, mother, don't cry—I am so happy! You shall never want a child, nor I a mother, any more!" Nor did they—one or other of them. Jenny worked skilfully at the dress-making; and though she never "made a fortune," she kept the aged pair in plenty till they died. It was none of their own children, but the adopted one, who closed their eyes.

And, as afterwards it came to pass that Jenny, like many another of the good women—nay, the best women of this world—never married, she, in her turn, adopted a desolate baby—Keziah's orphan child. Thus the blessing of a good deed came down even to the third generation.

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